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HETTY'S RESOLVE.



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HETTY'S RESOLVE.

A Story of School Life.

Nash

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "UNDER THE LIME TREES," "AUNT ANNIE'S
STORIES," ETC.



SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET,
LONDON. MDCCCLXXI.

250. C. 375.





... was in her favourite spot under the large chestnut tree,
... Little Carrie was lying on the ground beside her".

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HETTY'S RESOLVE.

CHAPTER I.

AT HOME.

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk doth make men better be ;
Or standing like an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere.
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night,
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see,
And in short measures life may perfect be.

BEN JONSON.

"SHE seemed really sorry about it. Well, it is strange. I should never have thought she would have cared in the least," said Hetty Brewster to herself, as the door of the schoolroom closed behind her governess ; "I should never have thought it, no, never. Well," she continued, as she picked up the lesson-books which were scattered about the table, "the world is full of incomprehensible things ; here am I, who have the pleasantest home

in the world, extremely pleased at the idea of going to school, while poor Ada Dalton, who I should have said lived in the very dullest house in London, looks as if she thought school the most terrible place in the world. It is very queer; I should have thought she would have been glad to go anywhere to get away from home. That's one incomprehensible thing; and another is, that Miss Rye should look melancholy at the idea of losing me for a pupil—I who have been worrying her out of her senses for the last eight years. I should have thought she would have been infinitely delighted at the thought of being rid of me. Perhaps she really is; but, no, I don't think so, she looked very genuinely sorry. I fancy she and Ada are something alike, and rather enjoy the feeling of having a great deal to put up with, and dislike the idea of having an easier life; I am sure there are people in the world who like to think they are martyrs. Oh, mamma, I didn't see you, how quietly you came into the room; what are you laughing at?"

"At you, Hetty," said Mrs. Brewster, smiling; "you were talking to yourself so busily when I came in, that at first I thought you were repeating a lesson."

Hetty coloured. "You didn't hear what I was saying; did you, mamma?"

"No, my dear, you have betrayed no secret; you need not look so alarmed."

"Oh, it was no secret, mamma. I'll tell you what I was thinking about, if you like."

"Not now, Hetty; it is almost lunch time, and you have your music to put away, and your hair to make tidy before the bell rings. If it is no secret we can talk about it at lunch."

"It's no secret, certainly," said Hetty, as she ran upstairs to her room, "and yet I don't know that I care to talk about it before papa, if he comes in to lunch. Perhaps he won't, though."

To talk about what? Hetty would have been rather puzzled to explain what she meant; she was feeling just now rather *put out*, as she would have said, and yet it was not easy to discover any real cause for this unpleasant sensation.

Hetty had a friend, a girl a little younger than herself, by name Ada Dalton; but, as is frequently the case, the two friends were very dissimilar in all respects. Hetty loved change, and the society of girls of her own age, therefore the idea of going to school was very pleasant to her; but to Ada—shy, timid, stay-at-home Ada—the prospect was the very reverse of agreeable. To attempt to change the intentions of her father and aunt, when they decided that she should go to school, Ada never dreamt of doing. She submitted to her fate, but to join in Hetty's expressions of delight was out of her power; and the latter, unwilling to blame her

friend, concluded that Ada's melancholy arose from an impression that her father and aunt did not care for her.

"She says that they never tell her what they are going to do with her; that she found out she was going to school quite by accident; and that they seemed to think she would have no more feeling about the matter than a table or chair," exclaimed Hetty, vehemently, when on discovering that Mr. Brewster was not at home, she had ventured to discuss the subject with her mother during the early dinner.

Mrs. Brewster listened in silence till her daughter inquired in conclusion, "Now, mamma, isn't it too bad, isn't it a great shame they should treat Ada in this way?"

Then she smiled and replied, "I think you are quite mistaken, my dear. Mr. and Miss Dalton have not the least intention of treating Ada unkindly; but they do not quite understand her, and I am sure have no idea how she feels on the subject."

"Then they must be as blind as bats, mamma, and it's a pity somebody does not enlighten them," said Hetty; and she would have continued the subject had not her father's step been just then heard in the hall approaching the dining-room door.

Mr. Brewster was a surgeon in large practice, and so entirely was his time occupied by his pro-

fessional duties, that his family saw little or nothing of him throughout the day. It was a rare event when he appeared at the luncheon-table, and when he did he liked peace and quietness, and knowing this, Hetty prudently dropped the subject on which she felt so much interested.

"The children have done their dinner," remarked Mrs. Brewster, as her husband sat down in his usual place; "you had better go, my dears, and then papa and I will be able to hear ourselves speak."

Delighted with this permission, the small folks speedily disappeared, and Hetty soon followed them. Mr. and Mrs. Brewster were then left alone.

"Which way do you drive this afternoon, Edward?" inquired Mrs. Brewster, after some minutes' silence.

"To Hampstead," was the reply; "are you inclined to come?"

"Well, I don't know; yes, I think I will. I haven't been with you for an immense time. But are you going to start at once?"

"In half an hour. I have to go to No. 6 first?"

"To Mr. Dalton's; is anything the matter?"

"He is dying," was the laconic answer.

"Dying, and you sit there eating your lunch in that way; nonsense, Edward, you are not serious."

A half smile passed over the doctor's face as he

replied, "That is the message I had, word for word."

"But you don't believe it, you mean. Do tell me, Edward, is there anything the matter with that man at all?"

"A great deal I am afraid; in fact, such a complication of complaints, that I have not the slightest doubt they will kill him some day; but I don't think that day has come yet, or as you justly suppose, I would have gone without my lunch for once. In the first place, then, he has all his life been in the habit of thinking and acting solely for his own comfort and pleasure—a dangerous complaint that, you will allow; then he has nothing on earth to do—enough to kill anybody; and lastly, he has such heaps of money, that it is a perfect misery to him. Could anything be more deplorable than such a condition?"

Mrs. Brewster laughed, "That is a complaint you will never die of, my dear," she replied.

"I seldom leave Mr. Dalton's house without thanking God on that very account," he replied; "but I must go to him, and meanwhile you will get ready for your drive."

He rose, and was about to leave the room, when his wife stopped him, saying, "Wait one minute, dear Edward," and then she repeated to him what Hetty had told her of Ada's distress at the indiffer-

ence with which she was treated at home, adding, "if he is well enough, could you not give him a hint, that he might speak to his daughter about his plans concerning her?"

Mr. Brewster paused. "Poor child!" he said, "yes, I'll see;" and the next moment he was gone.

Ada Dalton was lounging in an easy-chair in the drawing-room of her father's house that evening, with a book in her hand, and some fancy work in her lap.

She was, however, neither working nor reading, but indulging in a long fit of musing, the subject of which was of course the impending change in her circumstances. Had she been asked whether the prospect of school life pleased her, she would have found the question very hard to answer; in fact, since she first guessed that the matter was settled, she had been asking herself over and over again, how she liked it, and had been unable to come to a very satisfactory conclusion.

"One thing I know," she kept repeating to herself, "it may be dull and stupid at school—Hetty says it will be—but I'm sure it can't be duller than home is, at least my home. Of course, Hetty's home is different; she has got a mother and a father who care for her, and a brother and sisters, and I have only one brother at home, and I

never see him now he has taken it into his head to spend his days poking about in the courts and worst parts of London; and papa never seems aware of my existence, and Aunt Jane only finds it out when I want a new frock, or haven't done my hair tidily. If only Rowland and Charlie would live at home, it wouldn't be quite so dull; and, oh! if I had only got a mamma like Hetty's." Here Ada's reflections were disturbed by the sudden opening of the door, and the appearance of a footman carrying a pile of down cushions, which he arranged with great care and particularity in a large easy-chair, drawing the same towards the fire.

This being a sure sign that her papa and Aunt Jane had finished their dinner and were on their way to the drawing-room, Ada sat upright in her chair, and resumed her book, hoping thus to escape a lecture which Aunt Jane was rather fond of administering on the impropriety of girls of fifteen sitting in easy-chairs, a thing that was never known in her young days.

How her heart beat when her father, panting and groaning with the fatigue of mounting the stairs, was heard to say as he entered the room, "Well, well, Jane, I'll speak to Ada, as you and Brewster seem so set upon it, but what on earth I'm to say to the child I can't imagine."

Miss Dalton made no reply; and sinking down

in the easy-chair, he continued, "Well, really, here I am in this chair again; who would have thought it, when a few hours ago I had made sure nothing could save me. But that fellow Brewster is a clever fellow, and no mistake. I only wish he hadn't such a practice, and wasn't out so much. I wish I could make it worth his while to give up some of his practice, but that's out of the question with all the expenses of education that I have—a boy at Rugby, another at Oxford, and now a daughter going to school. Ah, Ada, are you there; and what do you think about the matter—like it, eh?"

Ada's pale cheeks flushed at this inquiry; it was so seldom that her father took any notice of her, that the unusual occurrence quite bewildered her; but apparently he cared little for any answer, and said, "Mrs. Brewster says you require schooling and the society of girls. I don't see it, but I suppose she knows more of such things than I do, so I said you might go; but if you'd rather stay at home, you may. I won't have my child made unhappy to please any one."

"Ada is too sensible not to see what an advantage it will be to her," remarked Aunt Jane, stiffly. "I've always said it was my opinion she required the discipline of a school."

"Advantage, discipline—what humbug," said Mr. Dalton, impatiently; "the fact is, people do

nothing but rave about education now-a-days; for my part, I think folks were much better off when there wasn't such a fuss made about it; why, positively, I can't get my 'Times' in the morning till I don't know what time, because 'the cook's a rouding of it'—that was the message I got this morning."

And so the conversation wandered away from Ada and her school life, and she went back to her story-book and her melancholy reflections that nobody cared a straw whether she was at home or abroad.

The next few days passed rapidly by, and the last day at home arrived, and the last evening. Ada had already bidden farewell to her own home, her father, brother, and aunt, for it had been arranged that as the two girls, under the care of Mrs. Brewster, were to start quite early in the morning, Ada should sleep that night with her friend, and thus the household at No. 6 would not be disturbed any earlier than usual.

A very old friend of Mrs. Brewster's lived about a mile from Elmwood, as the village was called where Hetty and Ada were to begin their experience of school life; and she had begged Mrs. Brewster to come and spend a long day with her before she proceeded to Elmwood, to leave the two girls under the care of Mrs. Travers.

"Then we shan't go to Mrs. Travers's till the afternoon, I hope," said Ada, when Hetty had informed her of this arrangement.

"No, about tea-time mamma means to get there, she says," replied Hetty. "Ada, it's getting frightfully near; how do you feel? just think, by this time to-morrow we shall be there."

Ada gave a sort of gasp, "Oh, dear, I wish it was over," she said. "Hetty, aren't you sorry the quarter's begun before we were ready to go; you know all the girls will be back."

"Yes; mamma said two of them arrived while she was calling there last week," said Hetty; "nice-looking girls she says they were."

"And Mrs. Travers, did Mrs. Brewster say what she was like; is she very stiff and terrible?" inquired Ada.

"Not at all, Ada," replied Mrs. Brewster, who at that moment joined the two girls in the drawing-room. "She is grave, and rather sad-looking, but she has a very pleasant motherly manner. I don't think even you, timid and nervous as you are, will feel much afraid of her."

Ada's face brightened. "And how many girls are there, do you know, Mrs. Brewster?"

"Only nine besides you two. Mrs. Travers never takes more than twelve, and three left last quarter. They all returned last week, so you will

find them all at work. Now, my dears, we will go down to dinner, if you please."

Dr. Brewster was waiting for them in the dining-room. Ada had always looked upon him as one of her greatest friends, and his kind, encouraging manner to her throughout this particular evening raised him many degrees in her affection and esteem. The life in prospect seemed quite a different thing when considered as he and Mrs. Brewster viewed it; and while she listened to their conversation her courage rose, and she felt as if she should have been quite a different being if she had lived always with such people. Her aunt had said it was absolutely necessary for her to go to school, to acquire a more lady-like carriage and a better French accent, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Brewster said anything about these matters, though she felt quite sure that they did not consider them by any means unimportant; it was plain, therefore, that they thought something else of still more consequence, but what it was Ada did not feel quite certain.

The evening passed away only too quickly. Hetty's usually high spirits and lively talk had prevented any of the party from feeling dull at first, but by degrees they flagged, and by the time the family prayers were over, and the clock struck ten, both the girls' faces wore a look of anxious gravity very unusual to them.

"One would think you were going to prison instead of school, Hetty," said her father, smiling, as she wished him good-night. "What lines for your giddy face to show!"

Hetty tried to laugh in return, but some very large tears were gathering in her eyes, and she tried to make her escape before they were discovered, but Mr. Brewster stopped her, and said in a very different tone—

"We shall all miss you very much, dear child, every day, and all day long; but I am sure you will be happy, and I expect you will grow up a useful sensible woman, to come home and help mamma with the little ones, so run away to bed, and make all sorts of good resolutions that you won't disappoint me."

He kissed her more fondly than was his wont, and she ran hastily out of the room to hide the tears that would come at last. Ada had already gone upstairs with Mrs. Brewster, and was sitting on the foot of her bed, combing her hair, when Hetty appeared—

"Now, dears, I hope you won't talk, but make haste to bed," said Mrs. Brewster, as she was about to leave the room. "Hetty, how doleful you look; why Ada is much more courageous than you are."

"I'm a goose," said Hetty; "mamma, I'll be all right to-morrow, don't be afraid; and I mean to

work like a horse. You'll be quite surprised to see what an accomplished young lady I shall turn out."

Mrs. Brewster turned back as she had almost reached the door to give her daughter another kiss, and there was an almost sad look on her bright face as she said, "Be as accomplished as ever you can, Hetty; but, oh, darling, never forget, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.'"

"Yes, they care more about that than French pronunciation, or any of those things," said Ada to herself, when the light was extinguished, and Mrs. Brewster's words were still ringing in her ears. "That is what Frank says sometimes, but I never quite know what he means; perhaps I shall find out at school. If so, I shall be glad I went."

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGERS.

Oh, might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive, do good and love;
By soft endearments in kind strife,
Lightening the load of daily life.

KEBLE.

“*QUEL tapage ! mesdemoiselles*, it is time that you arrange the school-room, and prepare yourselves for the tea ; the bell will ring in two minutes.”

“Nonsense, *Mademoiselle*, it is only twenty minutes past five, we have full ten minutes yet ; and I expect we shan’t have tea till the new girls have made their appearance. Miss Travers said they were to be here by tea-time. There, I declare,” cried Agnes Melville, rushing to the window, “I heard the sound of wheels, I’m sure I did.”

“No, did you ?” exclaimed several voices, and leaving their several occupations, four girls of different ages joined Agnes at the window, all

eager to catch the first glimpse of their expected companions.

"Keep back, don't let them see you," exclaimed Agnes, as the crowd at the window having been reinforced by the arrival of three little girls from the other school-room, the party appeared certainly too large to escape notice.

"There, the carriage is driving in at the gate; there are three heads; I suppose it's the mother of one of the girls. Miss Travers said they were no relations, didn't she?"

"What are they like, Agnes, I can't see a bit, do they look nice?" said one of the younger girls, who had just come into the school-room.

"Oh, there's nothing very remarkable about them that I can see, Annie," replied the person addressed; "but I shouldn't think it matters much to you: they are ever so much older than you are."

"One of them is dark and the other's fair, and the dark one is looking all about her in a way I don't like a bit," remarked a tall, pale girl, who was leaning on Agnes' shoulder; "she thinks herself somebody of no small importance, I imagine."

"Then I suppose you will make it your business to undeceive her, Florence," replied a merry-faced lassie, who till this moment had appeared far more interested in a difficult lesson than in the arrival of

the strangers. She had not joined the group at the window, but throughout the confusion and bustle had remained at her place at the table.

Florence smiled, and turning from the window, remarked, "As they have come, it might be as well to get ready for tea; are you not going upstairs, Maggie?"

"In a minute, if I could only find this horrid word. Mr. Dibdin will be almost frantic when he sees my exercise to-morrow, and I haven't half prepared my Cæsar."

"We shall have some fun then, Maggie," remarked a round-faced girl, who was lounging comfortably in the arm-chair which was the special property of the governess. "I know my Cæsar particularly well, but I shan't help you one atom; it will be such fun to see you in disgrace for once. Mr. Dibdin's favourite with her exercise all blotted, and her Cæsar half done; poor man, what will he do?"

Maggie laughed, "You'll have to help me, Bertha," she said.

"I daresay; no, indeed, I shan't. I shall sit at the top of the table crowing and capering while you are floundering along as best you can. Oh, it will be fun!"

"There's the tea bell," Maggie exclaimed. She and Bertha Wood were now the only occupants of

the school-room, the others having gone to their rooms to make themselves neat for tea. "Bertha, is my hair very rough?"

"Shockingly; you can't think of going down that figure," replied Bertha; but there was a twinkle in her eye that convinced Maggie she was in one of her teasing moods, so she took no notice of the remark, and hastily tumbling her books into her cupboard, ran lightly downstairs.

She was the last to reach the dining-room, and entered just as Mrs. Travers was introducing the new comers to their future companions. Mrs. Brewster had already gone, and bewildered by the novelty and strangeness of all around them, Hetty and Ada were feeling more nervous and shy than they had ever done in their lives before.

To Ada, who with the exception of Hetty, had never had any companions of her own age, the gaze of so many pairs of eyes was peculiarly trying, and it was some time before she regained sufficient confidence to look around her, or form any opinion of her schoolfellows.

Tea over, the girls returned to the school-room for another hour's study, and Mrs. Travers took Hetty and Ada with her into her own little sitting-room, that, as she said, she might become better acquainted with them, and find out what progress they had made in their different studies.

"At seven o'clock we all meet in the drawing-room, and spend the evening together," she said. "You can work or draw, whichever you prefer, my dears; and now I want to hear about your homes, and anything you like to tell me."

"I shall like Mrs. Travers very much," Ada mentally ejaculated, as she sat listening to Hetty's account of her home life, and took shy peeps at the grave but gentle face of her much dreaded governess. "How different to what I thought she would be;" and Hetty's thoughts were very similar.

The hour passed only too quickly, and both the girls were sorry when Mrs. Travers rose, saying, "Now, suppose you go to fetch your work, they must be expecting us in the drawing-room. They would not like to begin to read without us."

Hetty's shyness had by this time quite vanished, and though Ada still blushed and felt very uncomfortable when all the girls looked up as they entered the room together, her friend seemed quite at her ease, and ready to be amused and interested in what was going forward.

All the party were busily employed in different ways, and Agnes Melville, the eldest of the eleven young ladies, held a book in her hand which she was evidently waiting to read aloud.

Agnes read well, and the book was an interesting one, but it was some time before either Hetty or

Ada paid much attention to it. Ada was thinking how alarming it must be to read aloud before so many people, and hoping that it would not fall to her lot to undertake such a task; and Hetty was no less busily employed in examining her new companions, and endeavouring to make up her mind which she should like and which dislike.

Agnes Melville she considered for some time without coming to any conclusion; she was an ordinary looking girl, amiable and pleasant enough, yet Hetty felt, she hardly knew why, that she did not altogether like her. Florence Benson, she thought, was far more likely to suit her taste; she had a soft and gentle way of speaking that Hetty thought particularly charming, especially when contrasted with the somewhat abrupt manner of Agnes. Next to Florence, intent on a difficult crochet pattern, sat a tall girl whom Hetty thought must be one of the elder ones, but whom she afterwards discovered to be only thirteen, two years younger than herself. "She looks perfectly stupid," was Hetty's not very flattering opinion of Josephine Calthrop; fortunately it was not spoken aloud.

These three were seated with Hetty and Ada at a round table at work, and from them Hetty's eyes wandered to another table, where sat three other girls drawing. "I like those two at the other side," said Hetty to herself; "that one they call

Bertha looks as if nothing would put her out, and I could see at tea time that everybody likes Maggie Grey, and I'm sure I shall; she looks so bright and merry. Then there is Ella Wharton. I can't make her out; she looks heavy and rather cross; I don't think I shall like her. And then there are the three little ones—I don't even know their names yet; and Miss Travers and Mademoiselle, and Miss Kirton, and I wonder what they are like. Oh! dear, I wish I had been here a month, and knew all about it."

But here Hetty's musings were interrupted by Mrs. Travers asking her to take her turn in reading.

"I don't remember how old your mamma said you were, my dear," she said; "but all the young ladies read aloud, and I think I must reckon you as one of the eldest."

"I was fifteen last November," Hetty replied; then seeing that Mrs. Travers looked from her to Ada, she added, "and Ada is three months younger than I am."

"Only fifteen; you are both so tall I thought you were older. Then Maggie and Ella are both older than you, I think."

"Yes, Mrs. Travers," said Maggie, as she rose to take the book from Florence Benson, "and Bertha is fifteen, you know. Here, Ella, it's your turn."

Ella laid down her pencil and took the book, and Hetty inwardly rejoiced that she had a little longer respite, for she had a peculiar dislike to reading aloud, especially when, as on this occasion, she had strangers for her audience.

How long that first evening seemed, perhaps because our young friends were tired out with the day's excitement; certain it is they were both of them heartily glad when prayers and the simple supper was over, and bed-time arrived.

"I wish we could have had a room to ourselves," whispered Ada to Hetty, as they followed tall, silent Josephine Calthrop to the large room they were to share with her and Maggie Grey. "I don't like the look of that girl."

"Hush, hush!" said Hetty, "she'll hear you. Never mind, we shall get on somehow. Which is my bed?" she inquired in a louder tone of Maggie Grey, who was already in her room, and half undressed.

"Those two, side by side, are for you and Miss Dalton," said Maggie, turning round from the looking-glass as they entered; "you can choose which you like. Are your things unpacked?"

"Yes, the maid helped us unpack," Hetty replied; "she was so particular how the clothes were arranged in the drawers, I thought we should never have finished."

Maggie laughed, then seeing that both Hetty and Ada had seated themselves on the foot of their beds, as if the process of undressing were of no immediate importance, she said, pleasantly, "Don't you think you had better go to bed? Mademoiselle will come for the candle at the half-hour, and she'll take it whether we are in bed or not."

Both the girls sprang up, exclaiming, "Only half an hour to get to bed in, impossible! what an idea."

"Yes, it is rather a short allowance," replied Maggie, brushing her hair vigorously; "sometimes I fancy she comes before the time, it goes so fast."

"I'm sure she does," said Josephine; "she doesn't like us, and she does it to tease us. Now, I've heard her stand gossiping with Agnes and Florence for at least ten minutes sometimes, while they were undressing—it's too bad. I never knew anybody so partial as Mademoiselle."

Maggie made no answer, and Hetty, who was eager for any scrap of information, inquired whether Josephine liked Miss Travers and Miss Kirton better than Mademoiselle?

"Oh, yes!" Josephine replied, "everybody likes Miss Travers, and Miss Kirton's all very well when she's in a good temper."

The tone in which this was said was not en-

couraging, and silence succeeded. Hetty, who was beginning to feel some of those miserable sensations that are generally called home-sickness, thought to herself that school was very different from home. How different their large room looked to her own cosy little bed-room at home, and how cold and miserable everything seemed. She wondered how Maggie Grey could look so happy—for happy she certainly did look as she bent over her open Bible, completely engrossed in its contents. "How can she find time to read when the candle will be taken in half an hour," thought Hetty, and at this very moment the door opened, and Mademoiselle appeared.

"Not in bed? *oh bien, mesdemoiselles*, I cannot help it, I must take the candle, you know."

"Oh, Mademoiselle," pleaded Maggie, as she rose and closed her Bible, "Miss Brewster and Miss Dalton are not used to get to bed in half an hour, please leave it a little longer to-night."

"And what for are you not in bed, Maggie? you are always late, you. I shall complain to Madame."

"I am just ready," said Maggie, throwing the bed-clothes back, and springing into bed. "You may take the light, as far as I am concerned."

"Well, I will leave it ten minutes for Mademoiselle Brewster," said Mademoiselle; "ten

minutes, and no more," and she shut the door and disappeared.

"Now, I advise you to be quick," said Maggie, "she'll keep her word, you may be sure, and be back in no time;" then after a minute's silence, during which she had been mentally reviving her own first impressions of school-life, she added, "These rules seem very tiresome, don't they? I remember how I hated them when I first came to school."

"I hate them still," said Josephine, sleepily; and Ada replied, "I can't see the use of them; what does it signify whether we are an hour getting to bed or not?"

"I suppose it's to save the candles," said Hetty, very gloomily; "if I'd known, I'd have brought a packet of candles to school."

Maggie laughed, then fearing that her merri-ment might seem ill-timed, she changed the subject, saying, "You are ready for bed, aren't you? I'm coming to tuck you up," and the next minute she was by Hetty's bedside arranging the bed-clothes, then, with a kiss and a "Good-night, Hetty," she ran round to perform the same office for Ada, and from thence, hearing Mademoiselle's returning foot-steps, she flew back into her bed in the corner.

That kiss, and that little act of friendliness, what a deal of good it did poor Hetty—the gloomy

thoughts fled away, and only a few sad ones remained; school no longer looked so dreary, though home was so far away, and everything around her was so strange and unlike what she had expected. And yet, if Hetty had been asked to explain what it was that made her feel so chilled and disconsolate, she would have found it hard to do so; she could quite agree with Ada that Mrs. Travers was much nicer than she ever dreamed a governess could be, and that the girls had not stared at her half so much as she had feared they would do—and yet she wanted something; and that kiss had done so much to comfort her, she wished all the girls were like Maggie Grey, and so thinking, and wishing, she fell asleep.

But one of the occupants of the four beds in the large bed-room lay long awake that night. Maggie Grey had read that night that apostolic injunction, which says, "Bear ye one another's burdens," and with her young heart eager to follow in her Saviour's steps, she was asking herself how she could help her new school-fellows in their new and strange life. Not in the least aware that she had already lifted off one corner of the burden that was oppressing them, she was fearing that her merriment had depressed and saddened them, and she was now busily considering the difficulties they would be likely to meet with the following day and deli-

berating in her own mind the best way of helping them.

"I must find out how much they know, and what classes they will be in," she said to herself. "I hope they are not going to learn Latin; Mr. Dibdin will frighten that poor girl Ada out of her wits. German and French they will manage; Mademoiselle's generally kind to new comers; but—arithmetic—Mr. Dibdin again. Oh! dear, what a fright I shall be in; I shouldn't wonder if he made Ada cry. Well, I'll tell her some of his ways before hand. I wish Ella would help me; I must try to talk her out of that notion that it is best to let new girls shift for themselves. She said to-day that everybody ought to learn to stand up for themselves—perhaps so; but the process of learning is unpleasant, and—and, in fact, I mean to help these girls, if I can, and perhaps dear old Ella will try too, if I coax very hard."

CHAPTER III.

ADA'S FEARS.

The fair, bright paths of wit and learning may
Lead off directly from the narrow way ;
The pride of intellect, the conscious height
The soul attains to in her mental flight,
At length may cause a less exalted seat
To seem too lowly at the Saviour's feet.

THE CROFT, as Mrs. Travers's house was called, was rather an old-fashioned house ; and to Hetty and Ada, who were accustomed to the lofty rooms of the houses in the West End of London, it seemed at first extremely dark and gloomy. The low ceilings and the narrow staircase, the small-paned windows, and old-fashioned grates were, however, soon forgotten in the enjoyment of the peeps of fresh verdure which the narrow windows afforded, and the pleasure of spare half-hours that were spent in the beautiful garden that surrounded the house.

"This is very different from our square garden, isn't it, Ada?" said Hetty, as freed from lessons and

school-room silence, they ran down the steps into the garden, and seated themselves under a large chesnut on the lawn; "how beautiful the sun looks through those larches."

"Lovely," said Ada; "but, Hetty, why did Miss Travers send us out before the others had done lessons? I was rather sorry, for I was trying to get those tables of weights and measures into my head that Maggie advised us to look over for the arithmetic lesson to-morrow."

"She said you looked pale, and she thought we had done enough to-day," replied Hetty, yawning, "and it only wants ten minutes to the half hour; the others will be out directly. Ada, tell me, how do you like them all?"

"All!" said Ada, "that's very indefinite. Well, all together I like them very much."

"Well, and now each one separately; how do you like them?"

Ada hesitated. "That's not so easy," she said; "but to begin at the beginning, I like Mrs. Travers immensely, she is so nice altogether, she seems so fond of everybody. I'm sure she's not a bit partial, is she?"

"You can't say as much for Mademoiselle," replied Hetty; "but what do you think of the girls, Ada? let's talk about them, and make haste, or they'll be out directly."

"I like the three little ones—Annie, and Nellie, and Carrie—very much," replied Ada; "and I like the others pretty well, except Florence and Josephine. I don't much like them."

"Don't you like Florence!" exclaimed Hetty. "Well, I am surprised; I thought you were sure to like her. I think she's a most delightful girl, and so pretty too. Why don't you like her, Ada?"

"I don't exactly know; perhaps I shall like her better soon, but I always think she is quizzing me and laughing at me. But who else do you like, Hetty?"

"I like Florence, and Maggie, and Bertha," said Hetty, decidedly; "Josephine is so sulky, and Agnes, well, I don't care much for her one way or the other."

"And, Ella," inquired Ada, "what do you think of Ella?"

"I don't know," replied Hetty, "I haven't seen much of her. Maggie and Bertha seem to like her, but I think she looks rather cross, don't you?"

"Hush, hush!" cried a voice from behind. Hetty and Ada were sitting with their backs to the house, and had not noticed that several of the girls had come into the garden. "I beg your pardon, Hetty, the leaves hid you, and we didn't see there was any one here, did we, Ella?" and

Maggie Grey, who was the speaker, turned to her companion, "I hope you weren't talking secrets, for we want to join you, this is the pleasantest place in the garden."

"Oh, do sit down," said Ada, making room for the two girls on the seat under the tree, while Hetty glanced at Ella, in the hope of discovering whether her last speech had been overheard; but Ella's face wore its usual expression, and Hetty hoped that as she had mentioned no name, neither of the girls would know to whom she was referring.

Ella was the first to speak. "You are going to have the pleasure of making Mr. Dibdin's acquaintance to-morrow," she said, looking at Ada; "how do you like the idea? I suppose you have heard something about him?"

"Not much that is pleasant," said Ada; "but I don't understand why you are all so much afraid of him; he can't do anything but scold, can he?"

"He can complain to Mrs. Travers," said Maggie, "and we don't like that, of course; but really I can't tell you why we are so afraid of him. I don't believe we any of us know; do you, Ella?"

"It is the look of supreme, withering contempt with which he regards me that I most dread," said Ella, musingly. "I wish I could laugh at him as Bertha does; she has such an enviable faculty of

taking the world easily. I wish she would tell me her secret."

"Here she comes, you can ask her," said Maggie, as the sound of merry laughter was heard, and Bertha, Agnes, and Florence made their appearance. "Here we all are," she added, as the three girls threw themselves down on the grass. "Now can any one tell why it is that we are all so desperately afraid of Mr. Dibdin? Hetty and Ada are anxious to know."

"Oh, because he's a perfect bear," replied Agnes, carelessly; "everybody knows that."

"And," Florence added, "because he's so frightfully particular. I dislike masters who are particular; as long as one has one's lessons done, what business is it of theirs whether one did them all oneself or not."

Hetty looked puzzled, and so did Ada, but the other girls seemed rather amused, as Florence after uttering this speech, glanced from one to another of her companions as if expecting sympathy and approval.

"Our old German master would have suited you, Florence," observed Agnes, after some minutes' silence; "he never asked any questions. We used to learn the same piece of poetry over and over again, and he never found it out, or if he did, thought it better to say nothing about it. Ah, we have become very honest of late."

No one replied to this remark ; possibly they did not altogether approve of their new friends being made acquainted with their past shortcomings, and wished that Agnes had kept her information to herself ; at length Hetty inquired anxiously, " Do the masters give us much to prepare, we seem to have so much to do ; and Mademoiselle seems to expect everything learnt so very perfectly ? "

" So does Mr. Dibdin, that's the worst of him," cried Florence. " I'm thankful enough I don't learn Latin ; as it is he drives me nearly wild over my sums ; my poor head was never made to understand arithmetic, I'm perfectly certain."

" I hate it," said Hetty. " I'm terribly backward, I'm afraid. I've only just begun fractions, and I can't understand them a bit."

" That's just the state of the case with me," said Florence, " only, as I'm older, I suppose it's more shameful."

" Then how do you get on at the class ? " said Hetty, and Ada listened eagerly for any useful hints that might drop.

Florence laughed. " I get close to one of the wise ones," she said, looking at her schoolfellows, " and I see as much as I can of what she's about ; and then if fortune favours me, and Mr. Dibdin doesn't look my way, to his great amazement, my sum gets done as fast as anybody's. I believe I'm a problem

which he hasn't solved yet; sometimes I seem so intensely stupid, that he is ready to tear my eyes out, and at other times I am almost a genius. If he did but know it, the secret of it is, that I am peculiarly affected by circumstances; for instance, if Josephine, or one of the young ones, is my neighbour, I'm perfectly idiotic; but if anybody as enlightened as Maggie will condescend to sit next to me, things are very different."

Hetty and Ada laughed. This seemed a very simple way of getting through difficult lessons, and Hetty was about to say so when Ada remarked, "But is that fair, do you think?"

"Fair, I should think not," Maggie burst out indignantly, her face flushing, and her whole manner growing eager and excited. "Mr. Dibdin says to Florence, 'Miss Benson, have you finished?' and Florence shows him her slate on which she has copied somebody else's sum; isn't that just the same as saying she has done it, when all the while she knows she hasn't. If that isn't deceit, I don't know what is."

"Thank you, Maggie; I'm much obliged to you for your flattering opinion," replied Florence, not in the least provoked by Maggie's straightforward way of speaking. "It must certainly be annoying to have a stupid creature like me appear as clever as your own accomplished self; no wonder you are angry."

Maggie made no reply, but turning to Hetty, said gently, "Though we are all so afraid of Mr. Dibdin, I'm sure he always sees when one tries to do one's best, so you needn't be afraid. I daresay you will get on very well. He will soon make you understand fractions; won't he, Ella?"

"Yes," replied Ella, "he certainly has a wonderful faculty for explaining things, if you can only keep quiet and collected enough to listen to him."

"I can't imagine what you all make such a fuss about Mr. Dibdin for," said Bertha, speaking for the first time. "I'm not a bit more afraid of him than he is of me. And I think it's a shame to frighten Hetty and Ada in this style. I verily believe they expect to see a man with half a dozen heads, instead of a poor innocent little creature like Mr. Dibdin. But, come, do let's talk of something else, or let's go and listen whether the nightingales are singing. Ella, come, will you?"

Ella sprang up, and Maggie Grey also rose from her seat in the long grass, saying to Ada, "Won't you come too, Ada, it's quite cool now;" and so by degrees the group under the chesnut tree dispersed.

Hetty alone remained. "She was tired," she said, when Florence invited her to go for a stroll, and accordingly she was soon left alone. It was just what she wished. Five days had now passed since

she became a schoolgirl, and in the novelty and excitement of all around her, she felt as if some wonderful change must have passed over her since she left home. It was pleasant to be alone, with no lessons claiming her attention, or schoolfellows to watch; and for some time Hetty leaned back against the trunk of the tree, and gazed up at the boughs and foliage about her, and thought of nothing but that the evening was delicious, and the air cool and refreshing after the heat of the day. But by degrees her mind reverted to the conversation that had just taken place. She had taken a great fancy to Florence Benson; "there was something so charming in her languid good temper; she was so pretty, so elegant and fascinating," Hetty said to herself, "it would be nice to have her for a friend." And then Maggie's words occurred to her: deceit! could Florence be deceitful; that sweet smile and pleasant voice and manner, could they hide insincerity and untruthfulness? Hetty did not think it possible, for of all things in the world she had been taught to avoid and to hate even the smallest approach to untruthfulness; "and yet it is not right of her to copy other people's sums, and pass them off for her own," reflected Hetty. "It did not sound wrong at first, but yet it is, it must be, and I am sure the girls thought so. Agnes said nothing, it is true, but she is so good-tempered, she doesn't like quarrels; and Ella and

Bertha said nothing, but Ella looked as indignant as Maggie, and Bertha looked very grave indeed for her. No, it couldn't have been right; mamma wouldn't have liked it, I'm sure."

And then Hetty's thoughts wandered off to her old home, and she was just settling to her own satisfaction, that no doubt her father and mother, then seated at their dinner-table, were thinking and talking about her, when the sound of the great bell, ringing to call the girls to the house, made her start up and hasten thither.

It was with a strange sensation of something unpleasant hanging over her that Hetty woke the next morning; and to Ada's exclamation of "Oh, it's the arithmetic lesson to-day," she could only reply, "I wish it was over, I'm sure." So nervous had all the remarks of the girls concerning their Latin and arithmetic master made her.

But like most of the events which we dread so extremely, the arithmetic master came and went, and Hetty and Ada felt disposed to think that his terrors had been made the most of, and to hope that they should get on better than they had anticipated. Very glad they certainly were when he made his parting bow and disappeared; but, as Florence remarked, they had got through, and that was something.

"But, oh, Hetty!" exclaimed Ada, "to think of

this coming every week ; why, I was so frightened, I hardly knew how many shillings there were in a pound when he asked me ; and as for the troy weight and square measure that I had learned so carefully, they had gone clean out of my head, and I shall have to learn them all over again before next time. I am sure once a week is too often for him to come."

"Herr Reinhardt comes twice a week, Ada," suggested Bertha, mischievously, "how will you like that?"

"Oh, but you all like Herr Reinhardt," replied Ada, "and I am very fond of German. I shall not mind his lessons, I expect."

"He is particular, too," said Bertha. "Florence doesn't like him much better than Mr. Dibdin. But never mind the masters now ; to-day's Saturday, and we have done with them for the present. To-morrow's Sunday, how delicious. But, Ada, I forgot, I meant to ask you to walk with me this afternoon ; we are going for a long walk to Deepdene Wood, and I always like to get a nice companion for our Saturday walks."

Highly pleased and flattered at the implied compliment, Ada promised, adding that she hoped Hetty would find somebody nice to walk with.

"Hetty doesn't half take care of herself," said Bertha ; "why doesn't she ask the girls to walk with



her, instead of marching along contentedly with Nellie or Carrie. Walks are very uninteresting when you have to talk to those small people; it is almost worse than talking French to Mademoiselle."

"I must ask Hetty who she is going to walk with," replied Ada; "she likes Florence, perhaps she has asked her to walk with her. Oh, Bertha, I've something I want to ask you very much; but, never mind, we'll wait till this afternoon, we shall have much more time then to talk about it."

"You've excited my curiosity," said Bertha, "why can't you ask me now?"

"Because somebody might come in," replied Ada—they were alone in the school-room—"or we mightn't have time enough to finish our talk; it will do quite well this afternoon."

"Very well," said Bertha, "I'll be patient. Oh, how delicious it is to have finished lessons for the week. I think it is a capital arrangement to have Mr. Dibdin on Saturday, it makes one enjoy Sunday twice as much."

The walk to Deepdene Wood was a favourite one with the girls; it was too distant to be reached in their usual walks, and, therefore, a fine Saturday afternoon was hailed with delight as a good opportunity for thoroughly enjoying it, and those to whom it was well-known generally took pleasure in exhibiting its charms to new-comers.

"There isn't such a place for hearing the nightingales within miles, and in spring-time the wild anemones and wood-sorrel, primroses and violets, perfectly cover the ground," said Bertha to Ada, as they started on their walk. "Do you care for such things, Ada?"

"Yes, I think so; but I'm such a thorough cockney I don't know much about them. Papa's got a place in the country, but he doesn't care about it, and we haven't been there for years."

"How you must enjoy this place, then," remarked Bertha; "but I forgot, perhaps you don't like school. By the by, what was it you were going to ask me. I'm almost wild with curiosity; I was wondering all dinner-time."

"Oh, it's nothing so very wonderful," replied Ada, colouring slightly, and glancing around to see if she was within hearing of any of her companions, "It's only something I overheard, and it made me so uncomfortable, I thought I'd ask you about it; you won't tell, will you?"

"It sounds very mysterious," said Bertha; "something you've overheard, and I'm not to tell. What is it; is it something about me, I wonder?"

"Oh, dear no," replied Ada, blushing; "if it was about you, I shouldn't dream of telling you, of course."

"Not if it was something nice, oh, yes, you

would. I think it's such fun to hear what people say about one. But what is it? don't keep me in suspense such an age."

"It's about Hetty," said Ada, hesitating; "you know we've been great friends ever since we were little children, and I don't like hearing anything said against her; it makes me miserable, and yet I don't think I ought to tell her, do you?"

Bertha laughed. "What a muddle you make of your story, Ada," she said. "I can't tell what you mean; who said anything against Hetty?"

"I dare say I'm very stupid," replied Ada, "but I'll tell you all about it. It was last night, just before the bell rang for tea, I went into the school-room to put a book away that I had left out, and Ella and Maggie were there. Ella was mounting a drawing, and Maggie was helping her; but I'm sure they were talking about Hetty."

"Well, and why shouldn't they, provided they said no harm of her; and I don't believe they would, for I know they both like her."

"Yes, I think they do, because Ella said in her short, queer way, 'I thought she'd more sense than to be taken in by Florence,' and Maggie said several times, 'It's such a pity, she won't be nice long if Florence gets hold of her.' What did they mean, Bertha? I feel sure they were talking about Hetty."

Bertha bit her lip, and looked, so Ada thought, extremely vexed. At last she said, "Did they know you were in the room, Ada?"

"No, I don't think they did. I went in through the children's school-room, and they had their backs to the door. But, Bertha, do tell me, what did they mean. Is Florence such a bad girl?"

"It's plain they didn't know that you were in the room," said Bertha, ignoring the last part of Ada's speech; "so, Ada, I advise you to take no notice of what you overheard, and forget it, if you can."

"I can't," said Ada; "but, Bertha, tell me, is there any harm in Florence Benson?"

"People think differently about that," said Bertha. "Maggie and Ella don't like her; but that doesn't prove much, they may be mistaken, you know. Now, Ada, my friend, I hope you like stiles, and stiles that slant all the wrong way—here's a charming one;" and Bertha, who was short and stout, tumbled over the said stile in a merry and rapid, but certainly not very elegant fashion. Ada followed more carefully, and Bertha, who seemed desirous to avoid recurring to the former topic, began a series of questions concerning the home Ada had left, and the way she spent her days in London.

Ada answered vacantly; she was thinking still

of Florence and Hetty, who walked a little ahead of them, and seemed engrossed in very interesting conversation.

Bertha noticed her abstraction, and noticed, too, her earnest gaze at Florence and Hetty. "Florence is pretty, isn't she?" she remarked at length; "everybody agrees about that."

"Yes, she is very pretty," replied Ada, warmly. "I think I never saw any one quite so pretty. She has such beautiful eyes, and such a very good figure. Hetty is pretty, but her figure spoils her, I think; don't you?"

"Perhaps so; but I don't care much about figures and eyes," said Bertha, "or, in fact, noses or mouths either. I know when I think a person is pretty, but I never could tell you whether the eyes were good or not. I suppose it's stupid of me, but I can't help it. Oh, they are going to sit down under that glorious oak. I'm so glad!"

Ada was not, for she had many inquiries which she still wished to make, and this was rendered impossible by their joining the rest of the party. She felt vexed and dissatisfied, and somewhat uneasy lest, as Bertha had given no promise on the subject, she might mention what she had told her to Maggie or Ella. So silent and engrossed did she appear, that Miss Kirton, who was in charge of the party, more than once inquired if she was

not tired; and Hetty's attention being thus attracted to her, she tried hard to induce her to tell what ailed her.

"She is a little home-sick, dear, I dare say," said Florence, as Hetty returned to her side after a fruitless effort to discover what had brought the disturbed look on Ada's usually placid face; "she'll get over it, and the less said about it the better, I always think."

So unsatisfied and uncomforted, Ada took her burden of anxiety home with her, and the more she thought over it, the greater did it appear. Ada had a constitutional tendency to make the most of little worries, and not knowing yet, poor child, how to lay all her fears and troubles at the feet of the great, the only real Burden-bearer, she hugged it closer and closer, till she fell asleep that night, to dream that her beloved Hetty had quarreled with her, and given herself entirely to Florence Benson, who was leading her into such mischief as most certainly Florence never dreamt of.

CHAPTER IV.

FLORENCE BENSON.

He liveth long who liveth well,
All else is being flung away ;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true deeds truly done each day.

Fill up each hour with what will last,
Buy up the moments as they go ;
The life above, when this is past,
Is the ripe fruit of life below.

BONAR.

SEVERAL weeks passed away, and Hetty and Ada ceased to feel strangers at Oaklands. They had made great progress in their acquaintance with the other girls, and when they remembered the dread with which they had looked forward to the prospect of coming to school, and the terrible pictures their imagination had drawn of stern, severe governesses, and cold, disagreeable companions, they could not refrain from laughing at the contrast between the dreams of their fancy and the reality.

It was about six weeks after their arrival that Ada was sitting, one Sunday evening, quite alone in the deserted school-room. Evening service was over, and the girls, with the exception of Ada, were strolling alone in the garden. Bertha had begged her to come too; but Ada had declined; she had not finished her theme, she said; and as Miss Travers would be sure to ask for it before bed-time, she must try and finish it before supper time. So, having hastily taken off her walking things, she returned to the school-room, and was soon seated with her writing-desk and the half-filled sheet of paper before her.

These Scripture themes were Ada's greatest trouble. Sunday after Sunday she toiled over them, and with ever-increasing discontent; and on this Sunday in particular things seemed more hopeless than ever. One page and a half of the sheet of note-paper was filled, and Ada sighed as she reflected that Miss Travers had said that morning, when giving the subject, "I think nobody will be able to say they can think of nothing to write on that subject."

"I can think of nothing, I am sure," she said to herself; "this page is all texts. I haven't put in one single idea of my own, and I can't think of one. I wonder how Hetty manages to get hers done so quickly. I suppose Florence helps her.

I wish somebody would help me—I do, indeed;” and Ada put her elbows on the table, and leant her head on her hands in a kind of hopeless desperation. Minute passed after minute, and still no bright idea flashed through the hazy confusion of poor Ada’s head. “Oh, dear! what shall I do?” she exclaimed, at length; “I must finish it somehow;” and, snatching up her pen, she was beginning to write a most unmeaning string of words, when Hetty and Florence entered the room.

“What, Ada, still fussing over that stupid theme,” said the former; “why, I did mine in less than no time.”

“I wish you’d tell me how,” said poor Ada, quite piteously; “it will be prayer-time in ten minutes, and what will Miss Travers say when I tell her I haven’t finished?”

“Florence, do tell her how you do yours,” said Hetty; “you helped me so much, and you can explain it so much better than I can.”

“Let me see,” said Florence, leaning over Ada’s chair, and reading what she had already written; “oh, that is quite grand. Now I’ll tell you my secret of managing these things. First, I think of a text that has something like the subject in it, or I get one of the others to tell me one; then I find it in ‘Cruden’s Concordance,’ and see what others there are something like it. I write them all down in a

string, and then I join on a few of the sentences you hear in every sermon ; and I assure you it turns out quite beautiful. Let's see, this is about charity. I should wind up by saying that charity should begin at home—that means one should be specially kind to oneself, I suppose ; but it shouldn't end there. I've heard that said in fifty sermons, so it must be good, you know."

Ada felt rather doubtful whether this system was altogether the right one ; but time pressed, and she was now so flurried and excited that she wrote what Florence dictated, without asking or thinking whether it meant anything or not.

It was such a relief to feel that the difficult matter was accomplished, that after folding it up and putting it into Miss Travers's hand she dismissed the subject from her mind altogether. Whether or not she should follow Florence's advice so readily on a less urgent occasion, she had not yet determined.

Miss Travers was lying on the little couch in her mother's sitting-room the next morning with a heap of papers in her lap, when Mrs. Travers entered the room with several letters in her hand, which she was just preparing to answer, when a strange look on her daughter's face made her lay down her pen, and inquire, "Is your head really better, Kate ? you look pale and worn out, my dear."

"Oh, it's quite well again, mother, it's only tired now; but I was thinking about the girls. Did you say you had had a letter from Mrs. Brewster?"

"Yes, such a nice one; that girl ought to turn out well with such a mother."

"Is it nice, will you read it, mother? I always like to hear Mrs. Brewster's letters."

Mrs. Travers complied, and her daughter remarked, as she folded it up, "Are you going to answer it now? she wants to know what you think about Hetty."

"Yes, she says she did not like to ask me at first, but she thinks that now six weeks have passed, I may not mind expressing some opinion. What shall I say, Kate? I think she is a fine, open-hearted girl, with no lack of abilities, but rather disposed to be idle; don't you?"

"Very, not rather, I should say," replied Miss Travers, "but I suppose *rather* is the word to use to a mother; but, mother mine, before you begin your letters, just let me read you three of my Bible-class papers, and then tell me what you think of them."

"Well, if you like, my dear; but won't it do after supper, for my letter to Mrs. Brewster will be rather a long one, and I shall be too sleepy to write it properly after supper."

"I've a particular reason for wishing to read

them before you write to Mrs. Brewster, mother ; so please listen, I won't be five minutes."

"They must be short compositions indeed," said Mrs. Travers, "but I'm all attention."

Miss Travers unfolded and read three papers one after another, with a slight smile, and yet it was a sad one on her face ; then, looking at her mother, she said, "And now, mother, what's your verdict?"

"Why, my dear, such papers are perfectly absurd ; waste of time, paper, pens, and ink. One of the girls has concocted hers, and then given it to the other two to read ; and they have written the same thing down as nearly as they could remember it."

"I should think so," said Miss Travers. "But what am I to do, mother ? Can you guess whose they are?"

"By your wishing me to hear it before writing to Mrs. Brewster, I suppose one must be Hetty's ; but I should never have guessed it. A girl with her sense and talents ought to be ashamed to sign her name to such a thing."

"But you don't know whose the others are?" inquired Miss Travers. Then, seeing her mother shake her head, she added, "Ada Dalton's and Florence Benson's."

"Florence's productions are never good for much," said Mrs. Travers ; "but it will be tire-

some if she makes those two new girls as idle as herself." Then, after some minutes' silence, Mrs. Travers resumed her pen, saying, "Well, my dear, if I were you, I would speak to all three girls; and I suppose I may as well give Mrs. Brewster some hints that Hetty might be more industrious than she is."

Kate Travers made no reply, and no sound was heard through the little room but the scratching of Mrs. Travers's pen on the paper. Half-an-hour passed away, during which Kate was revolving in her mind the task that lay before her. Timid and reserved as she was by nature, she never shrank from duty because it might be painful to her. And when Mrs. Travers closed her writing-case, and rose to join the girls in the drawing-room, she roused herself from her meditations to say—

"I shan't come into the drawing-room to-night. Will you send Hetty to me here, mother?"

Her whole heart rose in the prayer, "Heavenly Father, give me words of wisdom, gentleness, and forbearance, that I may so speak to her that she may feel that life is no time for trifling, but a preparation-time for the great eternity."

It was some minutes before Hetty made her appearance. She was surprised at the summons, and obeyed it rather uneasily. "What can Miss Travers want with me?" she kept asking herself,

as she went along the long passage that led from the drawing-room to Mrs. Travers' study. But, when she opened the door, and saw her own paper in Miss Travers's hand, the truth flashed upon her at once. For, though it is true Hetty had been growing daily more careless and idle over her lessons, she had not quite forgotten the good resolutions with which she had begun her school life; and the conviction that day by day she was breaking those resolutions would sometimes intrude itself upon her even in her giddiest moods.

"I want to speak to you about your Bible-class paper, Hetty," said Miss Travers. "Here it is. You see there are a good many corrections in it. And now, tell me, did you find this subject a very difficult one?"

"Not very," Hetty replied, turning the paper over uneasily; "but I was very sleepy yesterday afternoon, Miss Travers. I daresay I wrote a good deal of nonsense. Is it very bad?"

"Did you write it altogether yourself, Hetty?" inquired Miss Travers, looking earnestly into the girl's face.

"Yes, I wrote it—that is, I didn't quite make it up myself; but I wrote it all," replied Hetty, colouring still more.

"You wrote it, but Florence Benson helped you—that is what you mean? I thought so," said

Miss Travers. "But, Hetty, I would rather, for the future, that you would write it altogether yourself. Don't speak to any one about it. I would rather see what you can do without any help."

"Oh, Miss Travers," cried Hetty, "I can't; indeed I can't. It would be so difficult. I should never get done."

"The others get theirs done, Hetty. Why should you not do the same?"

"I don't know how they manage it," said Hetty. "It would take me days if I didn't get some one to help me. I suppose I'm stupider than they are."

"Is there no other way of explaining the matter, Hetty?" inquired Miss Travers, smiling. "Is it not just possible that some of the others may be more industrious than you?" Then, seeing that Hetty looked rather sullen, and did not seem disposed to speak, she added, "Indeed, Hetty, I'm afraid this is the case. I've watched you a good deal lately; and I am inclined to think that Herr Reinhardt is of my opinion."

"He is very cross," said Hetty, gloomily. "I don't think he likes me at all."

"Very possibly he likes those among his pupils best who take the most pains to please him, and who seem to enjoy their lessons most," said Miss Travers; "but I have been in the school-room at most of his lessons, and I never saw him cross to

you, Hetty." Hetty made no reply, and Miss Travers was silent for a minute, then she said, "You have a good many lessons to do, Hetty, and I dare say sometimes you fancy that if you stop to learn one thoroughly you will have no time for the others—is it not so?"

"I never had so many to do in my life," said Hetty; "it is quite impossible to do them all, Miss Travers."

"You think so now, I dare say; but have you really tried; honestly, Hetty, have you?"

Hetty could not say she had. She owned that there seemed to be so much to do, that she had thought most how she could get done. And as she said it, for the first time since she came to school, Hetty felt how completely she had forgotten her promises to her mother and her resolutions to work hard.

Miss Travers guessed what she was thinking about, and asked no more questions. "You have got bewildered and confused by our ways, which I dare say seem strange and new to you; but if you will try to think only of the work you have immediately before you, and not frighten yourself by thinking of what must come afterwards, you will get on much better. Make it your object, not merely to get through your lessons somehow, but to get through them well. It will be pleasanter as

well as better, for there is a great enjoyment in doing things thoroughly ; and then, Hetty, you must not forget that at school you will probably acquire habits that will last you through life ; if you slur over your lessons here, do you think it is likely you will give your mind more thoroughly to the other duties of life ? ”

Hetty was silent, and Miss Travers thinking she had said enough, bade her good-night, and let her go, saying, “ Let me see what a good paper you can write next Sunday.”

Hetty went slowly back to the drawing-room, and resumed her work, but her thoughts still lingered on the unpleasant subject of the difficult lessons, and the fact that she had been forbidden to seek help from Florence Benson. Conscience told her that many of the lessons she had done at home unaided were quite as difficult as those which she had now persuaded herself were so impracticable ; but she tried to silence its whisperings by declaring over and over again that Miss Travers was strict and disagreeable, and she was sadly ill-used.

Conscious that she looked as she felt, thoroughly unhappy, Hetty fancied that all the girls were noticing and watching her ; and, irritated by this idea, she answered Maggie so rudely when she inquired if she had the headache, that the latter

looked much surprised, and Ada wondered what had come over her friend.

Ada, too, had received her theme from Miss Travers, but being perfectly well aware that it was anything but a creditable performance, she had frankly owned that she was ashamed of it, and explained the difficulty she found in tasks of composition. Instead, therefore, of feeling deeply injured, Miss Travers's advice and explanations had sent her to bed more light-hearted and hopeful about her lessons than she had felt for a long time, and the idea that Hetty was cross and unhappy about the very same theme, never entered her head.

CHAPTER V.

A DAY IN THE WOODS.

Pleasant it was, when woods were green,
And winds were soft and low,
To lie amid some sylvan scene,
Where the long drooping boughs between
Shadows dark and sunlight sheen
Alternate come and go.

LONGFELLOW.

"AGNES, you are the eldest ; it really is your place to present our petition. It is a mere form, you know ; we always do have a holiday in the summer quarter. Mrs. Travers will say yes, if you will only ask."

"I don't like to ; I asked last time," urged Agnes. " Florence, you might, or Maggie, or Ella."

" Oh, I can't," said Florence, " I'm particularly in Mrs. Travers's black books just now—why, I haven't the slightest idea. I couldn't think of asking for a holiday ; but Maggie will, I dare say."

Maggie looked up from a book she was reading, and inquired what they were talking about.

Florence began to explain : " It's Agnes's birthday to-morrow, and we want a holiday, and, if Mrs. Travers will be so kind, we think a picnic would be very enjoyable this fine weather."

" Well," said Maggie, " has Agnes asked leave?"

" You must be deaf, Maggie," said Florence ; " here we have been quarreling for the last ten minutes who should perform that disagreeable duty, and you haven't heard a word."

" No, I haven't, really," said Maggie. " I was trying to make myself deaf, on purpose, because this piece of Herr Reinhardt's beloved ' Song of the Bell ' is peculiarly obstinate, and I can't conquer it ; but, considering this fact, I should be rather glad of a holiday to-morrow."

" There, the industrious Maggie would be glad of a holiday, and wants to escape Herr Reinhardt. Are you not shocked ! " exclaimed Florence. " Then, Maggie, under the circumstances, perhaps, you will not mind begging the holiday of Mrs. Travers."

Maggie looked rather doubtful ; but when Agnes added, " Oh, do, Maggie," she consented, and departed on her mission.

" I hope she'll say we want a picnic," said Florence ; " you forgot to tell her, Agnes."

"Mrs. Travers will think of that herself," said Agnes, "she always does; and, as there are so few of us, she'll manage to get ready some of the necessaries of life."

"I hope so," said Florence; "and I hope she won't insist on our sketching; it will be no holiday to me if she does."

"How you are shaking the table, Florence!" cried Bertha; "do sit down, there's Mademoiselle's arm-chair looking most inviting. If I had not this letter to finish, you should not have a chance of such a seat."

Florence complied with this suggestion, and waited patiently till Maggie's step was heard ascending the stairs, when she started up, exclaiming, "Well, Maggie, successful or not?"

Maggie's beaming face was, however, enough, and Florence threw herself down in the arm-chair, exclaiming, "What a relief! Do you know, Agnes, I felt so sure you would ask for a holiday, that I didn't take the trouble to prepare a single lesson for to-morrow. What should we have done if Mrs. Travers had refused?"

"It would have served you right," said Maggie. "What were you doing this afternoon? You had your German books before you, but I thought you didn't seem to be writing much."

"Wonderful penetration you have, to be sure,

Maggie," said Florence, laughing; "it was well for me Miss Kirton hasn't as much. Well, if you particularly wish to know what I was doing, I was planning the dresses of the bridesmaids at my sister's wedding. Alice doesn't mind having letters written on a page of an exercise-book; so, while to the world I appeared intent on my German exercise, I was in reality engaged on a much more important duty."

"Florence," cried Maggie, "you really are——"

"Incorrigible, my dear, is the word you want," suggested Florence. "Yes, I know it, and the sooner everybody else knows it, the better for me and for them."

"Why?" inquired Ella Wharton, who entered the room at this moment with her music portfolio in her hand, and had overheard the last remarks.

"Because, Ella, when they have discovered that I am hopeless, they will, I hope, leave off worrying me and worrying themselves about me."

"And put up with you as best they can," said Ella; "is that what you mean?"

"Something like it," said Florence, carelessly; "but I must find Hetty, and tell her about the holiday. I wonder whether she has done her German for to-morrow."

Mrs. Travers, who, in her way, enjoyed a holiday as much as any of her pupils, had two plans

for the following day, both of which sounded extremely pleasant; and when she told the girls they might settle among themselves whether they would rather spend the day in their favourite Deepdene Wood, going there directly after breakfast, and staying till the cool of the evening, or, by taking two boats, go up the river to a spot which last year several of them had declared was exactly the place for a picnic, there was a good deal of discussion before the matter was decided in favour of the boating excursion.

"What will you do if it isn't fine?" inquired Hetty, as Maggie raised the blind of their room and gazed out into the summer night. "Shall we stay at home and have the holiday all the same?"

"Yes, I suppose so; but it will be fine. I never saw a more glorious night; we shall have a splendid day, I am sure."

And Maggie's prophecy was a true one. Scarcely a cloud was to be seen on the soft blue sky when they woke the next morning, and all declared it was a perfect day. "No fear of our not being warm enough," said Mrs. Travers, as she heard this remark going the round of her pupils. "I am glad, my dears, you have put on cool dresses, but, Florence, surely as there will be no one but ourselves, it was a pity to put on that delicate, white muslin; you would feel much more at your ease in

something commoner—that lilac muslin you wore on Sunday, for instance.”

Florence's smiling face clouded over in an instant, as she replied, “This is one of my oldest dresses, Mrs. Travers; it doesn't in the least matter if I do spoil it, and I like it better than my lilac.”

“Very well, my dear, do as you like. We must take plenty of wraps in the boat, for though it is so warm now, it will be cool on the water in the evening.”

Florence's brow cleared, and she glanced at Hetty with a meaning look that Hetty was at a loss to comprehend; she had never before seen Florence so handsomely dressed—in fact, the latter frequently said that it did not signify what one wore at school, and Hetty had always thought her extremely careless on such subjects. She determined to find out the meaning of such apparent inconsistency; and, accordingly, when they had fairly set out, and were on their way to the spot where they were to find the boats, she inquired of her friend why she was so anxious to wear that particular dress that day.

Florence laughed. “I don't know that I really cared much about the matter,” she said, “but I have a great dislike to Mrs. Travers interfering in things that don't concern her. I am quite old enough to know what to wear without being told; and though

Mrs. Travers expects to be quite undisturbed in her retreat to-day, I don't altogether."

"What do you mean, Florence?" inquired Hetty, surprised.

"Nothing so very wonderful, but you know I told you that papa's country house is not many miles from here, so when I heard it settled last night where we were to go, I wrote to Alice and told her to contrive to ride over and take a peep at me. I dare say Charles and Ralph will come too. I want them all to know you, Hetty. Alice said the other day that she was longing to make your acquaintance."

Hetty's cheeks flushed. Florence's family were rich, and of considerable importance in the neighbourhood, she knew. She glanced at Florence's finely embroidered dress and handsome hat with its graceful white feather, and wished she had known of the honour in store for her before they had started. Florence noticed her look and laughed, as she remarked, "Now you know why I put on this dress, Hetty, but I am glad you didn't appear in white; blue suits you much better. But here we are close to the river; keep your own counsel about my little plot. I don't care for everybody to know."

Hetty had no time to inquire why. The business of settling the party in the two large boats was

going forward, and for a time the novelty of the scene engrossed all her attention.

Much to her chagrin, Miss Travers, who was taking the direction, had separated her from Florence; Hetty found herself placed in the second of the two boats with the three little ones. Mrs. Travers, Mademoiselle, and Maggie, and Ella, while Florence, Agnes, Bertha, Josephine, and Ada had already started with Miss Travers and the English governess.

She had made up her mind that she would spend the whole day with her new friend—for friends she and Florence had resolved to be—and Ada, who for some time past, had been trying to imagine that Hetty had merely neglected her because she was so occupied with her lessons, was a good deal hurt to find that she had no wish for her society, but, on the contrary, seemed rather to avoid her.

The row up the river was delightful, and only too soon ended, for the sun had by this time gained great power, and the breeze on the water was a welcome relief.

It was a pleasant, shady spot they had chosen for their encampment, and as it was still too early to think of making preparations for dinner—that most important part of a picnic—the girls separated and sauntered off in twos and threes to explore the little wood, and examine an old house which had

once been inhabited by a nobleman's family, but was now completely deserted, and left to the care of a poor old woman, who lived there with no other society than that of an old cat, and still older dog.

It was a strange old place, most of the upper rooms had been left to the undisturbed possession of rats, mice, frogs, and spiders, who seemed anything but gratified with the unexpected appearance of their visitors; and many were the exclamations and screams, as first one and then another discovered that a spider was spinning its web across her face, or a frog had hopped upon her foot.

Apparently, these small accidents added to the excitement of the ramble, for though Mademoiselle protested that it was not a place for young ladies or for anyone who had any respect for their appearance, the more the rats scampered and the frogs hopped, the more Maggie, Bertha, and the three little ones seemed to enjoy it.

But to reach the top and see the view, which was the object of their most earnest desires, appeared almost impossible; the staircase was broken, and certainly dangerous, and though Bertha declared that there was no difficulty at all, Maggie and Ella felt that, as at all events it was unsafe for the little ones, who would be sure to follow if they attempted it, it was wiser to give it up.

Down stairs again they accordingly trudged, to

relate to Mrs. Travers their exploits, and to discover if it was time to set about the work of preparing the dinner—a task in which they all wished to assist.

“I am going to ask Mrs. Travers to let Nellie and me be the waiters,” said little Carrie Fleetwood, as she tripped down the rough steps holding Maggie’s hand. She was the youngest of the three little ones, a fairy-like child, the pet and plaything of the older girls.

“But will Annie not want to be waiter, too?” inquired Maggie; “we should be well attended to, indeed, with three waiters, I think.”

“Annie does not mind,” said Carrie; “she said it would be better for the little ones to do the work, and Nelly and I were very glad. Oh, there is Mrs. Travers, I must run and ask her, Maggie.”

Maggie released the little hand, and stood watching the child as she scampered off towards the spot where Mrs. Travers was seated with some work in her hand, then she turned to look for her companions, who had undertaken to conduct Nellie and Annie safely down the broken staircase.

“We have got down without any broken bones, you see, Maggie,” said Bertha, “and we could have managed the last flight, too, if you and Ella had not turned cowards; but where are all the rest?”

“I saw Ada, Josephine, and Agnes looking extremely comfortable under the shade of a weeping

willow," answered Ella, "and Hetty and Florence disappeared together directly we got out of the boats—inseparable as usual. By the by, Maggie, can you guess why Florence has made herself so magnificent to-day?"

"She told Mrs. Travers that was one of her oldest dresses," said Bertha; "now, as I know she had it new last Christmas, I must say her dresses do not appear to wear very well."

Maggie and Ella were silent till, as Bertha turned away to join the group under the willow-tree, the former remarked, "I've failed in all my attempts with Hetty; haven't I, Ella?"

"Florence has got hold of her now," said Ella, "but she may get tired of her yet, or Hetty may find out what she is, I shouldn't wonder; well, you've done all you could, dear."

"I don't know," said Maggie, "perhaps we might have been kinder to her. Florence has such pleasant ways, no wonder people take a fancy to her. I often wonder how it is that people who don't know or care a bit about religion are often so much pleasanter and nicer altogether than real Christians. Don't you often notice it, Ella?"

"Yes," said Ella; "I suppose they think that manner isn't of much consequence, and I'm not sure that I don't think so too. I'd rather be blunt, and rough, and offhand, than pretend to take a great

interest in people and things that I care nothing about. I hate pretence."

Maggie laughed. "How often you say that, Ella darling," she said; "but isn't it possible to train oneself to take an interest in other people's affairs, and isn't it the right thing to do? Surely Christian people ought to be as pleasant, and in fact more pleasant, than other people. Isn't that one way of making our light shine before men?"

"I suppose so," said Ella; "but if so, it's a particularly hard duty—harder than anything, I think?"

"Because you are shy, Ella; but it can't be hard to everybody."

"It's because I'm lazy," said Ella, bluntly; "it's so much trouble to me to be pleasant and agreeable that when I do it's only by fits and starts. I can't make a habit of it—I wish I could; perhaps if I had, Hetty would not have taken such a dislike to me."

"I don't think she has," Maggie was beginning, when hearing Mademoiselle's voice calling them, the two girls ceased talking, and ran to lend their help in laying the table.

It was a merry meal, and rather a noisy one, for the two little waiters made so many mistakes that in spite of their entreaties that they might be allowed to do it all, the elder girls were frequently

obliged to go to their assistance; but the more mistakes the more fun. The little ones laughed at their mistakes, and only wished that everybody would go on eating all the afternoon.

"And let you and Nellie have no dinner, Carrie," said Miss Travers; "how would you like that?"

"Very much," Carrie said; but Nellie, who was a less enthusiastic waiter, did not seem quite so certain on this point, nor did she express so much amusement when it was discovered that a meat pie on which she had intended to make her dinner, had fallen a prey to a hungry-looking dog which had been prowling about for some time in the belief that among the good things which he saw, there must be something suited to his appetite.

Carrie thought him very clever, and was so amused at his audacity that she never thought of grudging him his feast, and Nellie soon caught the infection of her merriment, and joined in laughing at the rapid disappearance of their dinner. Fortunately there were plenty of good things still remaining, so the poor dog enjoyed his meal undisturbed.

"I wish we had brought a book," said Agnes, when the dinner had been cleared away; "it is too hot to walk about much, and it would be so nice if somebody would read aloud."

"I thought you would probably think so," said Miss Travers, "and so I brought one of the new books from Mudie's with me. Who will like to read to us?"

No one answered, and Miss Travers looked round, saying, "Where is Florence? She is generally the one to volunteer to read."

But Florence had disappeared; and Miss Kirton, seeing that none of the others seemed disposed to undertake the task, good-naturedly offered to make a beginning.

"That will be very pleasant," said Mrs. Travers; "but before we begin, does anyone know where Florence is? I can't think why she runs away so much to-day."

The girls looked at each other, and Ada at last replied that Hetty had told her that she and Florence had found a cool shady place among some nut-trees at a little distance, and that she believed they had gone there again together.

Mrs. Travers looked hardly satisfied, but she made no reply, and the reading commenced. The party formed a pleasant-looking group—some working, some stretched on the soft grass, revelling in the delights of idleness, while the little ones were busy making wreaths, to decorate their hats, of the wild flowers that grew around them. No discord had as yet disturbed the enjoyment of their holiday—

all the young faces were peaceful and contented. Ada Dalton and Ella Wharton alone wore a look of rather anxious thought ; the former was wondering why her old friend had apparently lost all relish for her society, and the latter was revolving in her mind the subject of her late conversation with Maggie, and asking herself rather sadly whether it was really true that her love for her Saviour was so small that it left no mark at all upon her outward bearing and conduct. It was a painful thought, and Ella tried to persuade herself that pleasing manners were of very small importance, but it would not do. "He never broke the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax," was said of our Divine example, and Ella felt that in His eyes a want of gentleness, love, and courtesy was no trifling defect.

Meanwhile where were Hetty and Florence? Comfortably seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, they were chatting undisturbedly concerning their homes and their probable futures. Florence launched forth in voluble descriptions of the parties at her home, and her brothers' and sister's friends, till Hetty, who had seen very little company, and had had very few pleasures of an exciting nature, felt perfectly confused, and almost afraid to talk much of her own home lest Florence should despise and look down upon her.

"I mean to come out when I'm seventeen," Florence declared; "I shall be seventeen next December, and I mean to make papa give a grand affair in honour of the event. I haven't made up my mind what I'll wear yet; what do you advise, Hetty?"

"Oh, white," Hetty replied; "white suits you better than anything, Flo. How strange it is, I never heard mamma say when I should come out."

Florence smiled. "I should like so much to see Mrs. Brewster," she said, "I've got a picture of her in my head, and I want so much to see if it's at all correct. Is she like you, Hetty?"

"No, people say I'm like papa," Hetty replied; "mamma was very pretty when she was young; indeed, I think she is now."

"But she is quiet and rather stiff and dignified, isn't she?" said Florence, "and a wee bit too particular; of course I know she must be very nice, Hetty, from all you've told me, but I think I should be afraid of her."

"Oh, no, you couldn't be," Hetty replied warmly; but Florence started up, exclaiming, "I heard Ralph's voice, I know I did, and there are horses' feet, too. Oh, Alice, how good of you to come."

"We cannot stop any time," replied Miss Benson, who was by this time reining in her horse

close beside them ; there are hosts of people coming to croquet, and papa was quite angry at my going out to ride, so we must make haste back ; but I thought I would have a peep at you, dearie, and where is your friend ? ”

Florence drew Hetty forward and introduced her first to “ my sister,” then “ my brother Charlie,” then “ my brother Ralph,” and finally to Sir Reginald Rainsforth, whom Hetty knew quite well was shortly to become the husband of Miss Benson.

“ We have seen your respected governess, Flo,” said her eldest brother ; “ we passed the party about five minutes ago, and not seeing you there concluded that you had been naughty, and been left at home in disgrace ; how come you to be wandering so far from her protecting wing ? ”

“ Hetty and I preferred to enjoy each other’s company undisturbed,” said Florence ; “ but did you speak to Mrs. Travers ? ” she inquired, turning to her sister.

“ My dear Flo, how can you ask such a question ? you know how much I respect Mrs. Travers ; but really I must confess I like her best at a distance. Papa has been urging me to call on her ever since we came into this country ; but he will be cleverer than I imagine him to be if he gets me to do any such thing. I’m a perfect mule on such matters as this,” she added, laughing.

"Well, I'm glad," said Florence, "Mrs. Travers has no idea I asked you to come, and I was afraid you might have told her."

"Not I," said Alice; "I haven't quite forgotten my school days, Flo; but now I want you to ask Mrs. Travers to let you come home for next Saturday, we can send the carriage for you, and if your friend, Miss Brewster, will come, so much the better."

Florence looked at Hetty, who, blushing and confused, replied she should like it very much indeed, if Mrs. Travers did not mind; and Alice, turning to her companions, said, "Then we must go; we really must not stay, Flo, papa will be so angry."

"Stop, Alice," and Florence and her sister exchanged some earnest words in a whisper, while their brothers made some common-place remarks to Hetty on the weather and the country, then they said good-bye, and rode away, Charles Benson lingering to say to his sister, "You have shown your good sense, as usual, Flo, in your choice of a friend; bring her with you on Saturday."

In another moment they were all out of sight, and Florence, after watching them as long as they were visible, exclaimed, turning to Hetty, "We'll go on Saturday, won't we, Hetty? how angry Mrs. Travers will be at my going home twice in the quarter, but I'll manage her; only never let out about their coming to-day."

Hetty promised, though she was at a loss to know why Florence should be so anxious to keep it secret, and she felt more uneasy than she had yet done, lest all this mystery might hide some wrong-doing.

Perhaps her friend guessed her thoughts, for she relapsed into silence, and after a time proposed that they should return to the rest of the party, lest they should be missed, and Mrs. Travers might, as she said, ask awkward questions.

This remark, though carelessly uttered, perplexed Hetty still more; had they been doing anything that Mrs. Travers would disapprove of, she wondered, and, if not, why should Florence dread being questioned? It was strange, she could not understand it; and yet, Florence's manner was so unembarrassed, her laugh was so merry when they joined their companions, that it was hard to imagine she was conscious of any wrong-doing.

The long summer day was almost closed before the party re-embarked for their homeward journey. They had hoped for a moonlight row, but unfortunately the moon was hidden behind some thick clouds, which gave Mrs. Travers some uneasiness lest they should be overtaken by a storm before they got home.

The little ones were very tired, and before they had proceeded far, Maggie reported that Carrie had

fallen asleep in the bottom of the boat, and Bertha added, that Nellie would soon follow her example.

"We are all rather sleepy, I think," said Miss Travers; "Ada's and Ella's eyes look very drowsy; take care you don't fall into the water, Ada."

"Oh, there is no danger, Miss Travers," said Ada, rousing herself; "I couldn't fall asleep here, it is so delicious."

"So cool and quiet, isn't it," said Maggie; "don't you think this is the worst quarter in the year for working, Miss Travers; it really is too hot to do lessons?"

"You are not looking forward to to-morrow's work with much pleasure, I'm afraid, then. Do holidays make you feel lazy, Maggie?"

"Not exactly," Maggie replied; "but it is so quiet to-night, and we are all so amiable, that it is not pleasant to think that by this day week we shall be in all the bustle and excitement of the examinations, full of anger, malice, and all uncharitableness."

Bertha and Ella laughed, and Miss Travers said, "I hope not; is the latter part of your sentence a necessary consequence of the former?"

"The anger and malice necessary accompaniments of examinations, you mean, Miss Travers? I suppose not, and yet, I know they seem so sometimes."

Maggie's bright face looked so doleful, that Miss Travers smiled as she shook her head and replied, "It is a mistake, Maggie, I'm sure it is."

Maggie sighed. "Well," she said, "I'm sure it was dreadful last time; we were alternately wild with delight, and sulky as bears, according as our hopes were gratified or disappointed. I hope we shall get on better this time."

"I hope so," echoed Ella; and Bertha said, "Suppose for a change you busy ones make up your minds to be lazy, and let the lazy ones have a chance of getting all the prizes, we should be amiable enough then; and of all things I do like a quiet life."

"So do I," said Ella, "but not for all the peace and quietness imaginable, or unimaginable, could I tolerate being beaten by Josephine."

"There," said Maggie, "there's the first flash of our battle, Miss Travers; was I quite wrong?"

CHAPTER VI.

MAGGIE'S TRIAL.

To walk with God : resigning every weight,
To run with patience up to Zion's gate,
To hold affections fixt on things above,
To value heavenly more than earthly love,
To dread the frown of God's discerning eye,
More than the world's opprobrious calumny

* * * * *

Is harder work, too hard for arms like ours,
Opposed by principalities and powers,
Had He not covenanted to supply
Helmet and shield from Heaven's armoury.

JANE TAYLOR.

"ONLY a week more and we shall be at home," exclaimed Hetty Brewster, as she and Florence overtook Ada and Bertha, who were sauntering round the garden with lesson-books in their hands; "only one week more, and these tiresome examinations will 'be over, and we shall be at home."

Ada looked up from her book and smiled; Hetty was glad to be going home, and she was glad too for many reasons; but most of all, because when sepa-

rated from Florence, she hoped Hetty would be as much her friend as in bygone days.

"You don't look particularly delighted, Ada," said Florence; "perhaps in spite of the examinations you find school more lively than home; you have no brothers or sisters, have you?"

"Yes, I've three brothers," said Ada, "and they will all be at home now; but I like school very much, and I don't mind the examinations particularly."

"No more do I," said Bertha, "I think they are rather fun if you take them quietly as ——"

"As I do," interrupted Florence. "I don't distress myself about the examinations—in fact, considering how little I trouble myself about them, I get on wonderfully well."

"Yes, you were third in the French; how did you manage it," inquired Bertha, "I was surprised."

"I daresay you were," replied Florence, "but in matters like this, I am careful of my secrets, Bertha; you mustn't be too inquisitive."

"Oh, I don't care," said Bertha, "it was all luck I daresay; but come along, Ada, let's finish our history."

"Do you know, Ada," Bertha continued, when Florence and Hetty were out of hearing, "there's something very mysterious in Florence's success to-

day. I don't understand it: but you mustn't be cast down because you were rather low in the list; you'll do better in something else, and as it's your first term, your papa and aunt won't expect great things of you."

"Oh, no," said Ada, "papa won't mind." Poor child, she knew quite well that Mr. Dalton was not in the least likely to make any inquiries on the subject; "but I should like so much to have Mrs. Travers tell me she was pleased with my papers, as she did Agnes, to-day."

"Agnes has worked tremendously hard lately," said Bertha, "so I'm very glad she got some praise; but let's get on with the history, Ada. I wonder how those two will prosper to-morrow," she added, glancing at Florence and Hetty, who were chatting and laughing so merrily, that it was evident they were undisturbed by any apprehension for the next day.

Ada took the hint, and applied herself so earnestly to her work, that when the bell rang to summon them to the house, she looked more cheerful and hopeful than she had done since the examinations began; and to Bertha's inquiry of how she had got on, she replied, "Oh, much better; I feel as I knew a little about this. Are the history papers generally very hard?"

"Sometimes," said Bertha; "my plan is gene-

rally to answer the easy questions first, and so have as much time as possible to think over the difficult ones."

"That must be a good plan," replied Ada, thoughtfully; "yesterday I was so frightened at some of the questions, and spent so long over them, that I had no time to answer some that I knew quite well. I daresay I lose a good many marks in that way."

"Very likely," said Bertha, "it doesn't do to let oneself get frightened. Nervous people never get on in the world; but come, we shall be late in the drawing-room, and Mrs. Travers will scold."

Ada followed Bertha into the drawing-room and sat down to her work in rather a dreamy way. She would much have preferred continuing her history, for notwithstanding her assurance that she felt she knew something about it, she was far from being satisfied with herself, and in her excitement and anxiety, every moment that she was engaged on anything else seemed to her loss of time. To be high in the list was a thing she did not dream of, but to be lowest of all was what she constantly anticipated, and accordingly dreaded. As yet Josephine Calthrop, who could boast of neither great abilities nor peculiar industry, had prevented her from occupying that unenviable position, and in

arithmetic Hetty too had been placed lower than herself; but this circumstance had failed to give Ada any pleasure. Hetty had been so sullen and disagreeable in consequence, that Ada felt as if she had acted quite unkindly to her old friend, and almost hoped that such an uncomfortable success might not attend her future efforts.

Of course nothing now was talked of but the all-engrossing topic of the examinations; and as Maggie Grey had foretold, the unexpected results of many of them, gave rise to many unkind feelings which unfortunately frequently occasioned bitter speeches and disagreeable innuendoes. Such was the case on the evening in question, when Mrs. Travers and her daughter having been prevented from joining their pupils at the usual time, the girls were thus left free to express their opinions.

Florence, whose unusual success had excited universal remark, was smiling and amiable, satisfied with herself and all the world, nor did the insinuations of unfair dealing which were whispered concerning her, seem to disturb her serenity in the least.

"Never mind, Hetty; what does it signify," she said, when her friend would have indignantly replied to the observation that, "Certainly it was very strange; some people could do things when they chose: it was very mysterious," and much

more to the same purport. "They'll get over their surprise some day. I only hope my good fortune won't fail me to-morrow, or I shall be savage."

These remarks were made in an under tone, but they reached the ear of Maggie, who, deeply mortified at the result of the French examination, and yet anxious to keep from giving way to unholy temper, had been bending over her work, and trying to avoid joining in the conversation; but surprise now made her raise her head and look at Florence, as she remarked, "Surely, Florence, you can hardly expect to come off as well in the English history, seeing that you have scarcely looked at it."

Florence's self-possession failed her for a moment under Maggie's earnest gaze, but only for a moment. She laughed and said, "Oh, it's all luck, and I can't tell in the least whether I shall figure at the top or bottom of the list to-morrow."

"The top!" exclaimed Maggie, but she checked herself, and when Hetty asked indignantly, "Well, and why not?" she made no answer, but returned with greater earnestness than ever to her work, nor could she be induced to make any further remark, when Florence and Hetty observed that it must certainly be hard for those who had been used to be first in everything to be surpassed by those whom they had always considered dunces.

Poor Maggie, it certainly was a bitter dose, and there was no need of any further aggravation to add to her disappointment and mortification. "Ella said she could not bear to be beaten by Josephine, but it seems to me far worse to be outdone by Florence, at least when you feel quite positive that there must be something underhand. She couldn't, I'm certain she couldn't, have answered those grammar questions if Mademoiselle had asked them in the class. How could it be?" And thus Maggie thought and wondered on through the evening and far on into the night. Ella's sympathy and Bertha's droll condoling, "Well, Maggie, perhaps you and I will quarrel for the bottom place to-morrow," could not drive away the miserable feeling in her heart. She struggled with it; if she had done her best, why should she mind that Florence had done better still; was her real aim and object what she had hitherto imagined it—simply to do all things heartily as unto the Lord, or was it what it now seemed to be, merely that she might stand well with the world.

The stillness of the night, the silence of the large room in which she slept, spread their quieting soothing influence over Maggie's spirit. "I've been thinking of nothing but what Mrs. Travers and the girls would say," she mentally exclaimed as the angry storm of passion began to subside, and the

gentle voice of conscience became audible. "Of course they thought it strange, perhaps Mrs. Travers thinks I've been lazy. Well, I can't help it: it is tiresome certainly; but Jesus knows—" and so Maggie's thoughts rose to the mercy-seat above, to the faithful and merciful High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. She sought pardon, and peace, and strength for the future, grace to bear cheerfully whatever disappointments the morrow might bring in; and then tired, but happy, she fell asleep, and slept calmly for some time.

How long she had slept she had no idea, when she was awoke by Ada's voice calling her name in a loud frightened whisper.

"What's the matter?" she replied, rousing herself with difficulty; "what is it, Ada?"

"Oh, Maggie, didn't you hear? I thought you were awake; the stairs creaked so terribly, and the doors shut downstairs, I'm sure there's somebody in the house."

Maggie was now wide awake, and sitting up in bed. It was still quite dark. "It must have been one of the servants who has made a mistake and got up too early," she replied; "don't be frightened, Ada, go to sleep."

"Oh, I'm sure it was a thief," said poor Ada;

"the footstep was light, it sounded just like somebody who wanted to get downstairs without being heard. There, I hear it again."

Maggie listened. A footstep certainly was to be plainly distinguished; the old stairs creaked, but it must have been a very strange robber that could walk with that airy tread.

"It must be one of the servants gone downstairs to find out what the time is, Ada," said Maggie, at length; "whoever it is, has gone back to bed again now."

"No," said Ada, very positively, "I heard the step go down both flights of stairs, and the clock is on the first landing, and I heard a door open downstairs too."

"Then perhaps the clock on the landing has stopped, and cook, or whoever it was, went down to the dining-room;" and Ada, having nothing to urge against this reasoning, tried to dismiss her fears and go to sleep. Maggie, by nature more courageous and less subject to nervous alarms, was soon fast asleep again, and no thought of robbers or house-breakers recurred to her mind until the morning.

But while they were dressing, the subject was revived. Ada could not so easily forget her terrors, and she inquired of Hetty whether she had heard nothing strange during the night?

"I heard you say that somebody was walking

about the house," said Hetty, shortly; "but I was too sleepy to trouble my head much about it."

"Ada was sure there was a robber in the house, and I think she wanted me to go and catch him," said Maggie, laughing; "I don't know what she imagined I was to do with him, supposing I had succeeded."

Ada laughed. "I was so frightened," she said, "I don't know what I thought you could do."

"Ada is always so nervous," said Hetty, rather scornfully; "I don't know how many times she has fancied that robbers were breaking into her father's house in London; but nobody ever heard them but herself. I wonder whether Mrs. Travers or any of the other girls heard these mysterious footsteps last night?"

No, Mrs. Travers had heard nothing; and Ada was rallied about her fears and her nervousness till she began to think that her imagination must have led her astray. Maggie, it is true, had heard the footsteps ascending the stairs, but when appealed to by Ada for confirmation of her story, she said that she had so often heard the stairs creak when nobody was near them that she could not feel by any means certain that such had not been the case on the preceding night.

So Ada was obliged to try and think so too, and before long the far greater interest of the impending

examination had driven all other matters into the background. Till the moment she took her place at the table with her paper, pens, and ink, and the long row of questions before her, Ada had fancied that she knew her English history very well indeed. But now her courage fell, so many questions which seemed to her as if they would each require an answer several pages long—so many dates, Ada's peculiar abhorrence. Surely, after all, she was certain to fail. She glanced from one to another of her companions ; instinctively she turned first to Hetty—her puzzled bewildered look told plainly that she too thought the questions difficult, almost impossible ; and Josephine, who sat next to her, wore an appearance of still greater hopelessness and despair. From them Ada stole a look at Florence—her face it was impossible to read—calm, smiling, but a shade more thoughtful than usual, there certainly was nothing there that told of disappointment or despair. She had taken up her pen and begun to write before Ada had half read over the questions ; next to Florence, patiently plodding away as was her wont, sat Agnes Melville, and opposite to these two were Ella Wharton and Maggie Grey, the former earnestly considering ere commencing her task ; the latter, a clear light of humble subdued hope shining in her eyes, already writing with all her might.

"They do not look as if they thought them very difficult," thought Ada, glancing at Bertha Wood, who sat at the end of the table dashing away in the most indifferent manner imaginable, and who, catching her eye at the moment, made vehement signs to her to begin without loss of time. Ada took the hint, and remembering that Bertha had advised her to begin with the easiest questions first, spent the next quarter of an hour in trying to make up her mind which really were the easiest.

Time seemed to go at double its usual pace that morning, but Bertha Wood's pen went faster still, and before anyone else had nearly reached the last question, her name was signed with a magnificent flourish, and her paper was folded ready to be given in. Slowly, and growing every moment more nervous, Ada toiled on to the end, finishing just as Florence, with an extremely satisfied look, had handed her paper to Miss Travers.

"And now, Ada," said Bertha, "we are going into the garden instead of for a walk, and there we shall find out what glorious mistakes we've all made. Oh dear, how tired I am."

"And when shall we know who has won the prize?" inquired Ada, anxiously.

"Oh, this evening, I suppose; but as it's neither you nor me, Ada, it doesn't much signify."

"But I should like to know whether I'm last or not," said Ada, nervously.

"Last, of course not; Josephine takes good care of that for you."

"But, perhaps, she has done better this time. Who do you think will be first, Bertha?"

"Oh, Agnes, or Maggie, or Ella, I suppose, unless by some queer freak Florence has; she looks very happy and contented. Oh, Ada, I've been and put down that Henry V. married Catherine of Arragon, and that after his death she married William Wallace; do you think I shall lose many marks for it?"

"Oh, I should think not; because, you know, Henry V. did marry Catherine of something or other, and after his death she married somebody else—it can't much signify who it was."

Bertha looked doubtful. Mrs. Travers might not be so easy to satisfy as Ada would have been under the circumstances; but as there was no way of remedying the mistake, she was obliged to hope the best, till the papers were examined, and then, I think, she forgot all about her mistakes in the universal astonishment that greeted the announcement that it was Florence Benson who had gained the greatest number of marks, and therefore won the prize.

Florence first! It had been thought strange

and incomprehensible enough when she had appeared third on the list of the French examinations, but this was quite a different thing. And it must be confessed that to no one did the matter seem more surprising than to Mrs. Travers herself. Florence had now been two years under her care, and she had long ago made up her mind that there was no chance of her ever distinguishing herself by proficiency in any branch of study. "You must be making some strange mistake, Kate," she repeated again and again, as her daughter reported to her the result of the examination. "You have got hold of somebody else's papers, look again;" and again Miss Travers looked, but with always the same result; the answers so correctly given were certainly in Florence's handwriting, and her name was signed at the end.

"There is no mistake, mother," she said. "Well, wonders never cease; and, perhaps after all, we have been mistaken in Florence."

Mrs. Travers shook her head. "Are you sure there was no cheating, Kate?" she inquired; "you were in the room all the time?"

"I am quite sure that Florence had no books or memoranda to help her, mother; but I am no less puzzled than you are, for I overheard one of the girls saying, yesterday evening, that she was positive Florence had hardly read her history

through ; and, you know, she has been at the bottom of the class all through the term."

"There must be something wrong," exclaimed Mrs. Travers. "I am really quite vexed that Agnes and Maggie should have allowed themselves to be outdone by that lazy girl."

"It is very strange," replied Miss Travers ; "I could almost fancy that they had taken Bertha Wood's advice, and resolved to let the others win the prizes for once. I wonder whether they will do the same in the German class to-morrow."

"The more I think of it the more uneasy I feel," said Mrs. Travers. "I did not like the expression of Florence's face when she heard of her success ; she looked uneasy, though, of course, triumphant. Depend upon it, Kate, there is something wrong."

Miss Travers made no reply, but resolved that in the three examinations that yet remained she would be still more vigilant and watchful. If all was as it seemed, she had greatly mistaken Florence's character, she thought.

The German examination passed off in much the same way as it had done on former occasions, Florence being lowest of all, even below Hetty and Ada ; but this failure affected her very little. "I've certainly not the bump of language," she remarked

to Hetty as they went upstairs to bed, laughing, "and if I am first one day I can afford to be last the next. Now for the geography and ancient history—if I can only do well in them, papa will have to leave off grumbling. Really, I am getting more excited than I ever thought I should about such silly things as examinations."

Florence uttered this remark with a great appearance of gaiety, but the smile vanished the next minute, when she had said good-night to her friend, and had shut her door behind her. Agnes Melville, who shared her room, had gone to bed early with a bad headache, and was already fast asleep; there was no one now to watch Florence, no one likely to discover if she looked uneasy, and suspect the cause; she could venture now to look as weary and unhappy as she really was.

Yes, for once in her life the gay, laughing Florence was weary and unhappy, wearier far than if, like her schoolfellows, she had been hard at work over her lessons—for no hard honest work can ever cause the heart and head to ache, to ache as does the secret consciousness of double-dealing and the dread of discovery.

Slowly she undressed herself and laid herself down in her little bed, but without either inclination or intention to go to sleep. The day's work was

over for all else in the house, but Florence had yet a task to perform ; so she waited and watched till the great clock on the stairs had struck eleven, and then twelve—and then she slipped softly out of bed.

Hastily throwing her flannel dressing-gown around her, Florence glanced at Agnes to see if she were fast asleep, and then softly and cautiously she opened the door : it creaked, but in another second, swift as thought, Florence had closed it again, and was gliding noiselessly down the stairs. All was dark, still and silent, but Florence cared not for that—she knew her way, and her tread, though light, was sure. The stairs were safely passed, and she had reached the door of Mrs. Travers's private sitting-room—that door always creaked, and Florence hesitated a moment ere she turned the handle in order to gain courage to do so boldly. At last she ventured : it opened without a sound. Florence felt sure that this time she had not woke Ada, and she inwardly rejoiced at her success as she groped her way to the chimneypiece and struck a light. "Now to work," she thought, as still cautiously she opened the drawer where she well knew Miss Travers kept her papers. "I hope I shall find both the history and geography questions, and then I shall be saved the trouble of another midnight excursion. Oh, here they are both of them : that's

splendid;" and the next minute she was hard at work copying the long list of questions that lay before her, commenting on them as she proceeded. "Oh, that's frightful, I haven't the faintest notion where Madagascar is—let's see, the Cape of Good Hope is at the south of India—but I'll look them all up in the book to-morrow, and make such a dash; and now for the history of Greece—hateful stuff—I shouldn't wonder if I do that all wrong, even now. And yet I must win in this, or there will be no chance of papa's letting me leave at Christmas. I must—I will."

So saying, she finished her task, and having carefully replaced all the papers she had disturbed, she closed the study door, and began to retrace her steps. Why was it that as she passed swiftly along, she seemed in the darkness every now and then to catch a glimpse of a well-known face, a pale, worn delicate face, with an anxious, almost tearful look; why was it that as she closed her own door, and crept back into her bed, that face seemed to come nearer and nearer, its gaze growing every moment more mournful and tender, till the well-remembered form of her long-lost mother seemed to stand close beside her, and the soft thrilling tones of that voice that had long been silent in the grave rung in her ears, as the words she had heard from that mother's lips on her deathbed came back to her

memory, "Florence, the world's service and Satan's service is hard—you will find it so; but Jesus' service is perfect freedom, perfect peace, and perfect joy."

She was beginning to find it hard, and those words coming to her at that moment in her excitement and nervousness were too much even for her carelessness and indifference. Florence buried her face in the pillow and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"Well, they're all over now," said Ella Wharton, with a sigh of relief, as with Maggie and Bertha she left the dining-room after tea the day before the holidays began; "they're all over, aren't you glad?"

"Very," said Maggie, "it has been worse than ever this time."

"Oh, come, don't be so dismal," broke in Bertha, "I think it's been better, for you two have been far more amiable than usual. I think it does you good to be conquered sometimes."

"Of course it does," said Maggie, making an effort to shake off her depression, "it teaches us not to be conceited."

"By example and experience," said Bertha; "how Florence does go on."

"Don't let's talk about Florence," said Ella, wearily, "let's forget all that's happened in the

last few days, and settle all we'll do in the holidays."

"Now, really, Ella, that is absurd; you don't mind Florence's being first, do you? I'm sure I don't," said Bertha, laughing.

Ella turned away her head. "I wanted to be first in Grecian history—I had worked so hard for it. I was disappointed, Bertha; but I shall get over it soon."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Bertha after a pause, "then we'd better talk of something else; but Maggie didn't seem to mind much, so I thought you wouldn't."

"I'd make up my mind to be beaten," replied Maggie; "I saw Florence was confident, so I supposed she had some reason to be so. The only reason I care much is, that Mrs. Travers must think we've been wasting our time; but that will be all right some day."

Ella looked at Maggie somewhat curiously, her face had resumed its naturally sunny look, and the sadness had all disappeared from her voice. "You look far more as if you'd won than Florence," she said; "you two have such a faculty for taking things easily."

"I didn't take it easily at first, Ella," replied Maggie; "I worried about it far more than you have, a great deal more than I ought, for I

don't think we ought to be so set on winning, do you?"

"Of course we oughtn't," said Ella; "but somehow one forgets all about ought and oughtn't in these times of fighting and wrangling. Going home perhaps will make us more amiable."

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE SEA.

Man walks in a vain show,
They know, but will not know,
Sit still when they should go ;
 But run for shadows
While they might taste and know
The living streams that flow,
Or crop the flowers that grow
 In Christ's sweet meadows.

R. BAXTER.

It was about the middle of the week following that on which Hetty and Ada returned home that Mrs. Brewster was sitting alone in her drawing-room one evening. Hetty was out at a semi-juvenile party, and the younger children had all gone to bed. She had been busy for some time answering a number of letters, but they were all finished now ; it was growing dark, and still Mrs. Brewster did not ring for the gas to be lighted. She had been sitting for some time lost in thought, her head leaning on her hand, when the cheerful voice of Mr. Brewster roused her from her reverie.

"Sitting here all in the dark, and alone too, Harriet! Oh, I forgot that Hetty was out; what time will she be home?"

"I promised to send for her about half-past nine—it is a long distance, and I don't wish her to get used to late hours, or begin to fancy she is grown up."

"She has grown tall at any rate," replied the doctor, "but I wanted to ask you what you have settled about this Miss Benson's invitation; have you had any answer to your letter to Mrs. Travers?"

"Yes; it came this morning. She says that Miss Benson is the youngest child of a very wealthy country gentleman—a charming girl in many respects; but she hints pretty plainly that they are quite worldly people, living quite a gay life."

"Then that settles the matter; of course Hetty must politely decline the invitation: she can say you wish her to spend her holidays at home."

"I was sure you would say so, and I told Hetty so," replied Mrs. Brewster; "she seems greatly disappointed, and spoke in a way very unlike her; in fact, Edward, I can't help feeling very uneasy about Hetty."

Mr. Brewster made no reply to this remark, further than to observe that such violent friendship as that which Hetty seemed to have formed with Miss

Benson was very absurd, and not in the least likely to do either of them any good.

"Hetty does not think so," replied Mr. Brewster; "she says if we only knew Florence we should be delighted to think she had such a friend—she is so charming, so clever, and has such pleasing manners, and is so very pretty."

"She may be all that and a great deal more, and yet be a very unsuitable friend for Hetty," replied her husband; "but if you like, Hetty might invite her to spend a few days here, and then we can judge whether or not to encourage the friendship."

"I will propose it to Hetty," said Mrs. Brewster; "but am I wrong in thinking that Hetty's manner has changed towards us—do you notice any difference?"

"Not much; possibly it has occurred to me that she has spoken in rather an independent way occasionally; but that she was always rather apt to do, and of course she is rather more than ordinarily high spirited just now."

"Yes, at escaping from her lessons. I am afraid she is no fonder of study than she used to be."

"In short, you are disappointed, Harriet, and are beginning to wish that you had kept Hetty at home, is it not so?"

"I suppose I am; perhaps I had hoped too

much. I fancied that she was just the girl to benefit by the routine of school and the society of girls of her own age. You see at home she has no one but Ada, Gracie being so much younger than her sister."

"Well, and have you quite made up your mind that your plan has failed? Shall we write to Mrs. Travers that Hetty will not return to her?"

"Now, Edward, you are laughing at me," said Mrs. Brewster, "but are you yourself satisfied with Hetty. Do you not think she is in a restless state, fretting for excitement and dissipation, and thinking home dull and slow?"

"Possibly; but I think too that to a certain extent this is natural. You must be patient, and not expect too much. What do you think of little Ada; is her case as desperate?"

"Oh, no; I am delighted with the child, she is quite different—as innocent and girlish as ever, and yet so much less nervous and timid. She seems really interested in her lessons too, and especially in her Bible lessons with Miss Travers, who certainly must be a most judicious and interesting teacher."

"I am very glad to hear it, and I hope she has formed no violent friendship, but remains firm in her affection for Hetty."

"I don't know? She spoke a good deal of a girl named Bertha, who had helped her in her

lessons—a sensible, good-tempered girl, with no absurd notions about being grown up, I should think she was.”

“How these same absurd notions seem to irritate you, Harriet! But there’s the carriage, and our half-grown-up daughter, too, I suppose. I wonder she condescended to go to a juvenile party. Well, Hetty,” continued the doctor, as the young girl entered the room, looking very bright and pretty in her simple evening dress of white grenadine, “and how have you enjoyed yourself, my child?”

“Oh, tolerably, thank you, papa; there were the Metcalfes and Johnsons, and such a tribe of Somersets. Oh, mamma, have you ever seen Laura Somerset? she is very like Florence Benson, only, of course, not nearly so pretty.”

“Your friend must certainly be pretty, if that is the case, Hetty; but what did you do all the evening? Was there any music?”

“Not much, mamma. Julia Johnson and one of the Somersets played, and they teased me so that I was obliged to scramble through Heller’s Tarantella as well as I could, without my music.”

“It must have been a scramble indeed, Hetty, I am afraid; but, my dear, ring the bell for the servants to come up to prayers; it is very late, and you must go to bed.”

Several days passed away, and Hetty grew more quiet and contented, and her mother's fears for her accordingly subsided. The invitation which, with her mamma's permission, she had written to Florence, had been declined, and Mrs. Brewster, who had feared that Hetty would be greatly disappointed, was surprised and pleased that she did not show much vexation. "Such sudden friendships often turn out very transitory," she said to herself. "Probably, when Florence leaves school, they will cease to care about each other. I wish she would leave at once."

But Mrs. Brewster did not know the real reason why Hetty was, in fact, rather glad than sorry that her friend should not visit her home. She had a secret conviction that the quiet style in which her parents lived would be extremely tedious to Florence, who, she knew, was accustomed to spend her holidays in a constant round of amusements, and would therefore look with contempt on the simple pleasures in which she had formerly delighted. A drive into the country with her mamma, or a visit to the Botanical Gardens or a picture gallery, would, she knew well, have little charms for Florence, who thought things very uninteresting without the accompaniments of merry companions and gay attire.

On the whole, therefore, Hetty was rather re-

lieved to find that Florence had so many pressing engagements that she would be quite unable to accept her friend's invitation, and Ada rejoiced that she should have Hetty all to herself.

"It is so nice to have you all to myself," she said one day to Hetty; "it seems like old times again. How I wish you were going to spend all the holidays in town, or that papa would go into the country too."

Mr. Brewster was purposing to take his short annual holiday during Hetty's summer vacation, and Ada could not help fearing that she should find the time of their absence very dull.

"Why doesn't Mr. Dalton go down to Westhayes sometimes?" Hetty inquired, in reply. She felt rather uncomfortable at Ada's mention of the past, and wished to avoid any recurrence of the subject.

"I wish he would," said Ada, sighing; "I haven't been there since I was quite little, and I should like to see the place again; besides, it would be so nice to get out of London this hot weather. Aunt Jane tried to persuade him yesterday that he must be near your papa, because she thought, perhaps, then he would take us all to some place on the east coast, near where you are going; but he said it would be too expensive. I suppose it would cost a good deal, but I can't

understand it; I always thought papa was very well off."

"So he is," said Hetty. "I've heard people say so lots of times, and I am sure he lets your brothers throw away ever so much money."

"He never refuses them anything," replied Ada; "he says young men can't get on without money; but, oh, I wish he would go to the sea-side, I should so like it."

Hetty made no reply, but she did not forget Ada's wish; and the result of this conversation was, that the next day Mrs. Brewster called on Mr. Dalton and his sister to ask their permission to take Ada with her to the sea-side. At first Mr. Dalton demurred—the child was always away now, he said, and her brothers liked having her at home; but Mrs. Brewster had come furnished with an argument which she knew would be successful. Mr. Brewster had said that Ada looked pale, and was growing so fast, that really the heat of London might prove extremely injurious to her. No more difficulty was made—sickness of any description was Mr. Dalton's greatest dread—and in less than five minutes after Mrs. Brewster uttered this alarming foreboding, the whole matter was arranged to her satisfaction and Ada's inexpressible delight.

Ever afterwards Ada looked back on this trip

as the happiest time in her life ; the long rambles with Hetty and her younger brothers and sisters, the quiet talks with Mrs. Brewster, when she could almost fancy she could imagine what it must be to have a mother ; the pleasant evenings when they watched the moonlight on the sea, or sat at work while Mr. Brewster read aloud to them. It was such an entirely new life to Ada, she only wished that it could last for ever.

“ It does one good to see how that child enjoys herself,” remarked Mrs. Brewster more than once to her husband ; “ we could hardly plead that she looks delicate now, could we, Edward ? ”

“ Well, she cannot boast of being very robust, though I allow that just now she looks better than I have seen her for some time past ; she is slight and fragile compared with Hetty.”

“ Yes, but think what a home she has with that cold stiff aunt, and that tiresome old father, who never thinks of anybody but himself.”

“ I hardly think that either the aunt or father has to answer for Ada’s being thin and pale, though he is rather careful of his money. I believe she gets enough to eat.”

“ Of course, but I didn’t mean that. Young girls never thrive thoroughly without plenty of life and exercise, and some change of scene, and no one knows better than you, Edward, how entirely she is

debarred from all such things at home. That is why I urged her being sent to school, and so far I am very well satisfied that my advice was good. I can hardly help laughing sometimes when I think how shocked Miss Dalton would be to see her scrambling over the rocks spoiling her boots with sea-water, or digging holes in the sand to please the little ones."

"And you feel justified in encouraging her in such pranks. Well, I must own that I thought you had more respect for rightful authority; but here come the girls. Ada, what would Aunt Jane think of your boots?"

Ada looked down at her feet in some dismay, while Hetty laughed heartily as the picture of Miss Dalton's horrified countenance rose before her imagination. "Ada has been afraid to think of her aunt all the time she has been here," observed the latter; but Ada exclaimed, "Oh, but it is so different here: of course in London I couldn't go about like this; but here——"

"It is quite another thing," said Mr. Brewster; "you are right, Ada. But what have you been doing—capturing some more anemones, or getting your fingers pinched by crabs?"

"We have been looking for some more of that fern-like seaweed," replied Hetty; "but we can't find any, and the tide is coming in so fast that we

were obliged to come off the rocks. Oh, papa, won't you make up your mind to stay here another week; it is so much pleasanter than town just now."

"I can't, Hetty," replied her father; "but, if mamma likes, there is no reason why she and you, and the little ones, should not stay here for the rest of your holidays."

"And Ada, papa?"

"Of course, if Ada likes."

That Ada did like it was plain from her beaming face, and though for many reasons Mrs. Brewster would have preferred to return with her husband to town, she could not resist the entreaties of all the juvenile part of the party. How fast that last fortnight seemed to go; every day the girls complained more bitterly that the holidays had seemed much too short, and that they dreaded indescribably going back to school; but Mrs. Brewster did not encourage these complaints.

"You lazy girl," she said in reply to one of Hetty's lamentations on the evening of the day previous to their return to town, "would you like to spend your life in idleness?"

Ada looked down; but Hetty laughingly replied, "Yes, dear mamma, I believe I should very much. I believe I was born to be idle; it seems so natural to me, and I do enjoy it so."

"Hetty, Hetty, don't talk such nonsense; I'm

ashamed of you—born to be idle, you silly child, how can you say such things?”

“But, mamma, really it is so pleasant; now don't I look perfectly happy lounging here on the sand, lazily gazing at the sea, and doing nothing, and thinking about nothing?”

Mrs. Brewster shook her head, but she smiled sadly as she said, “Hetty, nine or ten years ago I knew a little child, a tiny child she was, of whom every one said that child is never idle, she is always busy at something. That same little child, Hetty, never saw any one busy but she was anxious to do something to help; if I was at work she must hold my cotton or my pins; if I wrote a letter, she loved to find me the envelope—in short, she was never lazy. I wonder what has happened to that little child, Hetty?”

“She's vanished, mamma,” said Hetty, carelessly, “and instead of her, you've got a lazy good-for-nothing daughter; but you'll have to put up with her, for the busy one will never come back, no, never.”

“And yet,” said Mrs. Brewster, “that same child promised me three or four months ago she would work like a horse, and come home to be a help to me some day. Where is that child gone, Hetty; is she vanished too?”

“Yes, quite vanished, mamma,” replied Hetty;

but there was a mist gathering in her large blue eyes, and she turned her head away as she spoke.

"And will she never come back?" pursued Mrs. Brewster; "yes, Hetty, I believe she will, for it is my constant prayer that God will bring her back. I cannot bear to think that my child will go through this world as if life were nothing but a long holiday, as if she had no work to do, careless of her God and Saviour, forgetful of her own soul, and therefore utterly indifferent to the souls of those around her."

Hetty was silent; her head was still turned away, and Mrs. Brewster could not see her face. No one spoke for some time. At last, Ada timidly inquired, "But is it wrong to like holidays, Mrs. Brewster?"

"No, certainly not, Ada; we cannot get on without rest and change sometimes; but nobody can thoroughly enjoy holidays unless they have earned them by hard work of some sort or other: the more tired you are the more you long for and enjoy rest, do you not?"

"Yes, to be sure," Ada replied; "but, Mrs. Brewster, Miss Travers always talks as if we should have a great deal to do when we leave school. She said one day that she was very particular that we should learn our lessons thoroughly, not merely for the sake of the lessons themselves, but that we might get into the way of doing everything we had to do as well as ever we could; but when I am at home I never

seem to have anything particular to do, and I suppose it will be much the same when I leave school."

"That depends a great deal upon yourself, Ada," replied Mrs. Brewster; "you must try and find out useful ways of employing your time: I do not think it will be very difficult. And if the love of God is shed abroad in your heart, and becomes, as I trust it will, the great animating motive of your daily life, I am quite sure that with your abundant supply of the good things of this world, you need never lack opportunities of usefulness."

Ada made no reply; she had listened eagerly to all Mrs. Brewster said, but one word struck her more than any other—that little word "if"; a great deal depended upon it, the whole of her future life and happiness hung upon that little word; so at least it seemed to Ada, and was she not right?

CHAPTER VIII.

SLIPPERY PATHS.

The fish with ease into the net doth glide,
But to get out the way is not so wide.

R. SOUTHWELL.

"AND so you are really going to learn Latin, Hetty," exclaimed Florence Benson, one morning after listening to a letter which the former had just received from her mother; "well, I wish you joy of it. Some time ago papa wanted me to learn Latin, but I declined very decidedly—two languages are quite enough for me; and, besides, the idea of spending three hours a week in Mr. Dibdin's society, why, I should become a perfect bear."

"Four hours, Florence," replied Hetty, looking very doleful; "the arithmetic lesson is two hours long, you know."

"So it is—the idea of my forgetting it; but about the Latin, Hetty, can't you manage to make

your mamma more reasonable? you must manage her very badly, I should think."

Hetty shook her head, and answered, "It's papa wants me to learn Latin; mamma doesn't much care about it, I think. It was papa's doing, in the first place, for I began about a year before I came to school, and he seems to have been under the impression that I was still learning, till something mamma said undeceived him, and so now I've got to begin again."

"I wouldn't, if I were you, Hetty," said Florence; "I'd rebel. Take no notice of the letter, and when you go home at Christmas, if any remark is made on the subject, just say quietly that you found you hadn't time to learn both German and Latin; and if your papa still wishes you to learn Latin, you must give up French or German: that's what I should do in your place. You know about such things as these, Hetty, you must know better than those at a distance. Now is not that common sense?"

"I think so," replied Hetty; "but mamma says she has written to Mrs. Travers to tell her what papa wishes; so it's of no use trying to avoid it."

Florence shrugged her shoulders. "Nonsense, Hetty," she said, "you give in much too easily; but I suppose the fact is, you haven't the same dislike that I have to that odious little man."

"Mr. Dibdin—oh, indeed I have; I can't bear him," exclaimed Hetty. "But how can I escape it, Florence; do you see any way?"

"Of course, it is simple enough. When Mrs. Travers speaks to you about it, tell her that you think your papa must have forgotten that you are learning German, and that as you feel sure you could not possibly do more work than you have now to do, you think you had better remind him of that fact before he decides. Then you might forget to mention it to your mamma, and so, of course, the matter would remain undecided for an indefinite period."

"But I don't know that papa has forgotten that I am in the German class," objected Hetty.

"He must have, unless he is a brute, which you would not wish me to suppose," returned Florence; "why, isn't he a doctor, and are not doctors always especially careful that their daughters should not be overworked?"

Hetty was silent, not because she was convinced, but because Florence's advice was so very much to her taste, that she was trying to persuade herself that it was quite sound and right. This was not an easy task, for in her heart she was pretty certain that her father was perfectly well aware that she was learning German; and she knew, too, that

though she might pretend to do so it would be quite impossible for her to forget the subject when writing to her mother.

Unhappily, trifling acts of deceit were by no means so repugnant to Hetty as they had once been. Florence proposed and practised them so frequently, and spoke of them as so completely unavoidable, that the scruples Hetty had once felt, and which she owed to the truth-loving principles in which her mother had sought to train her, were now greatly weakened, and inclination and her own wishes, far more than the convictions of conscience, were now her governing motives; her greatest anxiety being lest Florence should despise her, and consider her a girl of no determination and decision, simply led and governed by her parents.

It did not occur to her that while dreading that her friend might consider her a perfect child, incapable of judging and deciding for herself, she was all the time led and governed by Florence, striving to think as she thought, and acting in all respects as she advised. Do those who, like Hetty in this period of her school life, greatly dislike being thought dutiful and obedient daughters, and consider the Divine command which says, "Honour thy father and thy mother" no longer binding in this enlightened age, when, as they seem to imagine, children come into the world with new

powers and faculties, and ere they have attained their full stature have far surpassed their parents in experience and knowledge of the world; do they ever ask themselves whether they are not in reality enduring a far heavier bondage than submission to a parent's control would involve, from their constant desire to stand well with their friends and associates, and from the mistakes into which their self-conceit plunges them?

But to return to Hetty. Following Florence's advice, though with some misgivings, she escaped the dreaded Latin lessons for some time. Mrs. Brewster naturally concluding that her wishes had been followed out, and Mrs. Travers though surprised at first, that if Hetty had written to her mamma on the subject, she should get no answer, at last concluded that other affairs must be engaging Mrs. Brewster, and that she thought the matter of no immediate consequence. So several weeks passed away, during which both girls rejoiced in the success of their scheme, till at last one day Hetty received a letter from her mother, in which she spoke of paying her a visit on the following Saturday afternoon, the first of November, Hetty's birthday.

"It is the first time you have spent your birthday away from home," Mrs. Brewster wrote, "and as I do not like to think you will see none of us that

day, I shall try and come down for two or three hours in the afternoon ; but the days are growing so short now that I shall have to get home early. I wish papa could come with me, but he says it is quite impossible."

"Mamma will bring me my watch. I am to have a watch next birthday," observed Hetty, when informing Florence of her mother's expected visit, but neither the thought of seeing her mother nor the anticipation of the present she was to bring, made Hetty's face look as joyous as such expectations would once have done. Florence too looked rather grave and thoughtful, but when her friend inquired, "What shall I do, Florry, if mamma asks about that horrid Latin?" she roused herself, and said, "Oh, it will be easy enough to get out of it somehow. If your papa were coming it might be rather troublesome, but I am sure, Hetty, that you can manage your mamma easily enough."

"But, if she says something before Mrs. Travers, Flo?"

"Oh, she won't; I'm sure she won't. It will be your birthday, you know, and she won't want anything disagreeable to be said. I've often noticed that mothers always avoid asking questions about their daughter's lessons when they've a dim idea that something unpleasant may come out; and you may be quite sure, Hetty, that Mrs. Travers has written

full particulars to your mamma of the various scrapes you've got into lately."

Hetty coloured. "I haven't got into any worse scrapes than you have, Flo. Mr. Dibdin was as cross with you as he was with me last time; and Mr. Bruton was on the point of tearing your drawing up, he was in such a passion; and when Mademoiselle and Miss Kirton complained that we broke the rules about talking French, and leaving our books out, I am sure they said quite as much about you as me."

"No doubt they did, my dear; I never said they didn't. I am quite aware that it has been an established fact for the last two years that Florence Benson is a black sheep, and I assure you it doesn't disturb me in the least. As long as I can win in some of the examinations as I did last time, and so make papa think I'm fit to leave school, I don't care an atom what all the governesses in this world think of me; but with you I fancy the case is different: your father and mother would be completely miserable if Mrs. Travers told them she was dissatisfied with you—that she thought you lazy, etc., etc., but my father never troubles Mrs. Travers for her opinion, and wouldn't think much of it if she volunteered it, I fancy."

Hetty looked very much disconcerted. "I can't think why you got on so much better than I did in

the examinations, Florence," she said, "they all said it was mysterious, and I think so too."

Florence laughed. "My dear," she said, rather patronizingly, "when you've been at school as long as I have, you'll comprehend that when people are jealous they always say those spiteful things."

"I don't think Maggie or Bertha are at all likely to be jealous," said Hetty, shortly.

Florence opened her large dark eyes a good deal wider than usual with an expression of slightly contemptuous surprise. "Don't you?" she observed carelessly. "I gave you credit for more discernment, Hetty."

"Maggie and Bertha are so good," replied Hetty in explanation.

"So are Mr. Duvall and Mr. Lincoln, the two clergymen who have churches near us, and yet they are so frightfully jealous of each other, that they can't bear to hear each other's names mentioned," replied Florence, triumphantly. "No, Hetty, depend upon it, good people, or people who think themselves good, are just as jealous as we who don't set up for anything so superior."

Hetty was silent, she did not wish to quarrel with her friend, and yet she knew quite well that Florence was wrong, and that she was leading her wrong. "Ada is much happier than I am," she thought; "though she has no particular friend, all

the girls seem to like her, and she gets on better with the masters than I do, though I always used to think she was rather stupid ; I wonder why it is ?”

Not much need for you to wonder, Hetty ; have you not often heard that wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace ?

Hetty’s birthday arrived, and with it Mrs. Brewster ; but the joy with which Hetty would once have welcomed her mother, was clouded over now by the dread of inquiry and explanations concerning the Latin lessons. Florence laughed at her fears, declaring that, if only she would not look as if something was wrong, nobody would suspect anything. “ You surely can manage your mamma,” she replied, and Hetty tried to comfort herself with the thought that it certainly would have been much worse if her papa had come too.

Some of her anxiety must have betrayed itself, for scarcely had her mamma seen her and kissed her, when she began anxiously to inquire if she were quite well.

“ You look quite pale, my dear, and so grave ; why, what can be the matter ?”

Hetty replied that she was quite well ; and then anxious to change the subject, and divert attention from herself, she began asking many questions about home, her papa and sisters, till Mrs. Brewster quite forgot her fears, and grew completely engrossed

with other matters. She had brought the expected present, and in her unfeigned delight at her new possession, Hetty soon forgot her uneasiness. Florence was introduced, and the afternoon was passing rapidly away when the dreaded question came at last.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Brewster, as she was adjusting her bonnet-strings before her departure, "and how do you get on with your lessons? I hope you will succeed better in the examinations next time; and how do you manage with your Latin? papa is most anxious about that."

Hetty hesitated and coloured, then seeing that Miss Travers, who was present, looked surprised and seemed about to speak, she replied hurriedly, "Oh, mamma, papa didn't really mean I was to begin this term, did he? I felt sure he would let me wait till next quarter; I am certain he would if he knew how hard, how impossible it is to get my lessons done even as I am."

Mrs. Brewster looked greatly surprised.

"What do you mean, Hetty? surely you received my letter; why, I wrote to you and Mrs. Travers about it. Papa was so vexed when he found you had dropped it; did you never get my letter?"

"Yes, mamma," said Hetty, "but ——"

"I think there has been some mistake," observed Miss Travers, quietly; "my mother received

your letter, I know, Mrs. Brewster, and fully intended putting Hetty into the Latin class; but she told us that she thought her papa must have forgotten that she was learning two languages already, and proposed writing to you on the subject."

"What did you mean, Hetty? papa had not forgotten; he knew quite well that you were learning French and German; but you learned Latin too when you were at home."

"But I have so many more lessons here, mamma," urged Hetty; "really I wish you would tell papa I can't manage any more."

"But is that really the case, Hetty; do none of your schoolfellows learn Latin, as well as French and German?"

"Maggie, Ella, Agnes, and Bertha do, mamma; but they have been at school so much longer than I have. Oh, do ask papa to let me wait a few months."

"What do you think, Miss Travers," inquired Mrs. Brewster; "would it be too much for Hetty, do you think?"

"I think she has enough to do, certainly," replied Miss Travers, "because I should like to see all her lessons better done than they have been lately. But did you never mention the subject of the German to your mamma, as you said you would, my dear?" she added, turning to Hetty.

"No, somehow, I suppose I didn't," replied Hetty. "I forgot, I suppose."

"It is strange," said Miss Travers, gazing at Hetty, with a searching look, and she was about to add more, when Mrs. Brewster rose, saying, "She should lose her train if she waited any longer," and then finding it was even later than she had expected, hurried her adieus, and was gone before Hetty had had time to congratulate herself on having escaped detection.

That she had done so, Hetty never doubted; but she was mistaken. Miss Travers dropped the subject when Mrs. Brewster departed, but she did not forget it. It seemed so very unlikely that, being as anxious as she certainly was about the matter, Hetty should have completely forgotten to mention it to her mother; and when Mrs. Brewster had time to consider the matter, she, too, felt extremely fearful lest her daughter should have been guilty of deceit.

"She did not tell me, because she was determined to avoid taking the lessons, but she need not have told an untruth about it," said the anxious mother to herself, as she leaned back in the railway carriage and thought over what had passed. "Oh, Hetty, Hetty, that you should try to deceive your mother!" and Mrs. Brewster pressed her hand to her forehead, and once more wished that she had

never sent Hetty from home. The thought that her little *protégée*, Ada, was daily improving, that she seemed thoroughly happy at school, and to be really benefited by it, was but poor comfort; inas-much as it proved plainly that it was from no fault in those who had the charge of her child that the bright hopes with which she had parted from Hetty seemed so unlikely to be realized.

And yet Hetty was cleverer than Ada, and, in former days, though not remarkable for her industry, she had generally been rather a favourite with her governesses; and why was it that she had changed? Would the change last? Would she not in time remember the resolutions she had formed on leaving home, and instead of leading the empty, frivolous life which now seemed to content her, would she not once more turn to seek Him whom so lately her mother had fondly hoped she was beginning to know and love? Mrs. Brewster tried to trust that this, her first-born and much-loved child, would yet prove all that heart could wish; she strove to cast her burden of fears concerning Hetty at the feet of Him in whose sight no anxiety of his people is small or trifling, and the mother's soul was lightened of its weight of sorrow.

CHAPTER IX.

A SATURDAY EVENING.

Lightly soars the thistledown,
Lightly does it float;
Lightly seeds of care are sown,
Little do we note.

Watch life's thistles bud and blow,
Oh, 'tis pleasant folly;
But when all our paths they sow,
Then comes melancholy.

It was about three weeks after Hetty's birthday and Mrs. Brewster's visit, that Hetty and Ada were standing talking together in their bed-room, when Florence Benson joined them with an open letter in her hand.

"How I wish I slept in this room," she said; "it is so much larger and more cheery than that miserable hole that I share with Agnes. I wish I could turn Maggie or Josephine out, and come and put myself in their place."

"Oh, I wish you would, Florry," cried Hetty; "ask Mrs. Travers to let you change with Joseph-

ine; she wouldn't care. We should have such fun."

"Oh, it's not worth while now, my school days will be over in about a month, and, besides, we shouldn't have much fun unless we three had the room to ourselves," she added, glancing significantly towards Maggie Grey's bed in the corner.

Hetty was silent; but Ada replied innocently, "Oh, I should be very sorry not to have Maggie; she's the merriest girl in our room."

"Is she? That is not very complimentary to Hetty," said Florence, smiling incredulously; "but that wasn't what I came to talk about. Look here, Hetty, I've had another letter from my sister, insisting upon it that I must come on Saturday, and bring two of my schoolfellows with me. What shall I do? Will you two go?"

Hetty looked at Ada; she was rather surprised at this double invitation, for Florence had seldom taken much notice of Ada, and she was at a loss to understand what her object could be in doing so now.

Ada hesitated, then seeing that Florence was expecting some answer, she inquired, timidly, "Go where, Florence?"

"Why, go home with me on Saturday. You know I often go home on Saturday, and, though I've been rather too often lately, Alice declares I

must have one more holiday this half, and she wants me to bring you two with me. Will you go?"

"Oh, thank you, no, I think not, Florence; papa never lets me go anywhere," said Ada, quite alarmed at the idea of going among entire strangers; "I think I had better not."

"Why not, you silly little thing, we won't eat you?" replied Florence, patronizingly; "you don't mean to stay at home all your life, I suppose?"

"I don't know," answered Ada, "but I should be afraid to ask Aunt Jane: she would think it so idle of me; and really, Florence, though I am very much obliged to you, I think I had better not."

"Well, I'm sorry," said Florence, "but, Hetty, you'll come now, won't you?"

"Mrs. Travers won't let me, you know, Florry," replied Hetty, gloomily; "she wouldn't when you asked me last half."

"Write and get your mother's leave, and then she can't say anything, though I dare say she'll be frightfully cross," said Florence, laughing; "but that will be all the more fun. Oh, write, Hetty, by all means."

"What about?" inquired Maggie Grey, who just then entered the room and overheard the last remark. Florence told her, and Maggie's sunny face grew thoughtful as she replied, "Yes, of course, Hetty, you'd better write and ask your mother;

there will be just time for you to get an answer on Saturday morning."

"Only just," replied Hetty. She did not anticipate obtaining her parents' consent, and was therefore but little disposed to write and ask it.

"Oh, yes, there'll be plenty of time," said Florence; "you needn't ask your mother to write if she approves. If I were you I should say that if you didn't hear, you should conclude she had no objection; and now good-night, pleasant dreams to all of you."

Florence darted off without waiting for an answer, and the other girls remembering that Mademoiselle would shortly make her appearance to extinguish the lights, began to undress with more than their usual expedition.

"Do you think Mrs. Brewster will let you go, Hetty?" said Ada, after watching the workings of her friend's face for some time in silence.


"She would if it wasn't for papa," replied Hetty, sullenly; "he has taken up some absurd prejudice against the Bensons, though he can't know anything at all about them, of course."

Mr. Brewster had not thought it necessary to inform his daughter that through a mutual acquaintance, he had heard a great deal more concerning the Benson family than she had ever dreamed of.

Ada made no reply. Maggie seemed for a

minute about to speak, but checked herself, and turned from Hetty with a sigh; it seemed strange to her, orphan as she was, that any one could speak that word "papa," that sacred name, with anything but the deepest, fondest reverence. How often had she, when other girls spoke of their father or mother, turned sick at heart with the indescribable longing, the earnest yearning, for some of that love which those who enjoyed it seemed to value so little.

"How I should love them if I had them," she would say to herself; "and yet I have got them, and I do love them though they have passed out of my sight and are with Christ, my Saviour. They are mine just as much as Hetty's parents are hers, though perhaps it will be a great many years before I see them again; I hope it won't though." Bright, sunny-hearted, and sunny-faced Maggie, the world beautiful and delightful as it was in her eyes, being his handiwork who was to her the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, had still less charms for her than for many of her companions. Early called to part with her parents, it was long since she had known anything like a mother's love; but He who wounds that He may heal, that sends grief and sufferings to force the bereaved heart to turn for comfort to Himself, had taught that young ardent spirit something of that love that passeth knowledge, and led Maggie Grey to look for a city



which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God.

Saturday morning came, and Hetty awoke with her mind full of pleasant anticipations of coming enjoyment. She had, following Florence's advice, written to her mother to beg that she would allow her just for once to accompany her friend to her home, and she had pressed the matter so much that she had great hopes of obtaining leave; and indeed so much had she set her heart upon going that she could hardly refrain from an angry exclamation when Ada spoke of the matter as uncertain.

"There is the postman coming up the garden," she exclaimed as, from her seat at the school-room window, she spied that interesting functionary approaching the house; "dear me, how tiresome it is to have to wait till we go down to breakfast for our letters. Why shouldn't we have them directly they come?"

"Because, my dear," replied Bertha Wood, "you come to school to learn, not to read letters. If you were really anxious to make the most of your opportunities, you would desire your friends not to trouble your mind with news of the outside world; but I'm afraid," and she shook her head mournfully, "that you don't really desire to improve, or you would, I am sure, delight in the smallest oppor-

tunity of practising that most desirable of all virtues, patience."

"You won't have to practise it long," said Ella, "for there goes the bell; don't tumble downstairs, Hetty—a broken leg wouldn't be convenient to-day."

But Hetty was already half-way downstairs. She met Florence coming up; she had been practising in the drawing-room, and was going to put her music away in the school-room. She smiled at Hetty's eager face, as she said, "There's a letter for you, dear, I saw it in your plate as I passed the dining-room door."

She was right, but Hetty looked surprised and disappointed as she saw that it was not a letter from home, but one from her brother at school; she sat down and read it in silence, and when Florence whispered as they took their places at the breakfast-table, "Any news from your mamma?" she got only a melancholy shake of the head in reply.

"Wait a minute, Hetty, and you too, Florence," said Mrs. Travers, as the girls were leaving the room when breakfast was over, "I want to hear about your expedition to-day; have you heard from Mrs. Brewster, my dear?"

"No," replied Hetty, sadly; she was going to add, "so I suppose I mustn't go," when Florence broke in saying—

"But you only asked your mamma to write if

she objected, Hetty; so it's plain she doesn't. I thought she couldn't."

Hetty's face brightened; but Mrs. Travers inquired, "Are you quite sure you wrote in time for your mamma to send an answer, Hetty; when did your letter go?"

"The day before yesterday, Thursday," Hetty replied. "Oh, yes, there was plenty of time; I am sure she would have written if she had wished me not to go."

Mrs. Travers paused. "I suppose so," she said at length; "but I wish you had asked her to write either way, it would have been more satisfactory. But now, my dears, about coming home; I must desire that you won't be late."

"Oh, you may trust me, Mrs. Travers," said Florence, in her sweetest tone. "I'll tell papa he mustn't keep us, because it's Saturday night, and for Hetty's sake too, she isn't used to late hours." Then as the two girls ran upstairs to the school-room, she added in a very different tone, "Horrid old thing, how suspicious she was; but I've been too much for her this time."

"What do you mean, Florence?" inquired Hetty; but Florence only laughed and said, "I'll tell you some day. Now bend all your faculties to the solution of Mr. Dibdin's newest and most instructive problem;" and Hetty had no time to ask any more.

Slowly the morning hours passed. Both Hetty and Florence's heads were so full of other things, that Mr. Dibdin and the drawing-master complained more than once of their inattention, and Ada rejoiced that she had resolved not to go, when she saw how hard they found it to give their minds to their studies. Mr. Dibdin's black looks always made her tremble, and kind old Mr. Bruton seemed to feel so hurt when his patient instructions were ill attended to, that she could not bear the thought of incurring his displeasure.

But neither the gentle reproof of the one nor the sharp looks of the other disturbed Florence and Hetty in the least, as they drove away in Mr. Benson's carriage, which had been sent to fetch them, in the highest possible spirits. For some time they talked only of their delight at getting free from school, and then Hetty found to her surprise that her friend expected to find a very gay party going on at her father's house. She had imagined that she should meet only Mr. Benson, his eldest daughter and two sons, whom she had already seen, and when she found that there was going to be a large evening party, she began to feel very shy and uncomfortable. Florence however laughed at her, assuring her that she would enjoy herself immensely, and promising that she should not be teased to play unless she liked.

"I wish we could have a dance," added she; "but poor mamma never liked us to begin on Saturday night, because of course we sometimes kept it up so late, that we were too tired to go to church on Sunday, and papa keeps up the notion; very absurd it is, because everybody says Sunday's a day for rest; but we can't persuade him, so we must amuse ourselves as best we can with music."

"But my dress, Florence," said Hetty, "I brought my best white muslin to put on in the evening; but I'd no idea there was going to be a party: it won't do at all."

"No, dear, I understand; but I'm sure you won't mind wearing a low body of mine, your skirt will do beautifully; but, of course, a high dress isn't quite the thing. You won't mind, will you, dear?"

Hetty did mind very much, but she didn't like to say so; so she thanked Florence, and tried to look happy and pleased, while her friend proposed various schemes for their afternoon's amusement, and lamented that to please Mrs. Travers, they should have to leave so early.

"And now, Hetty, darling," continued Florence, "we're almost home, and I've something to give you before we get there." As she spoke she put her hand into her pocket and drew forth a letter. "Wasn't it clever of me," she said; "I thought that

as there was some doubt what dear, good Mrs. Brewster might say, I'd make sure of you before you had her letter; and then nobody could blame you, you know."

"A letter from mamma! Oh, Florence, how did you get it," exclaimed Hetty, in astonishment, "when did it come?"

"This morning, dear; I slipped into the dining-room and secured it before Mrs. Travers was down; wasn't it clever of me? Eh, what's the matter?" for Hetty, who had opened the letter, and was now reading it, looked extremely vexed and distressed.

"Oh, Florence, what shall I do? Mamma says I'm not to go; and here I am almost there. What shall I do?"

"Do, my dear, why, what can you do? you can't walk back, and the horses are too tired to take you. You must come on, there's no help for it; and I'm very glad there isn't."

"But what will mamma say?" urged poor Hetty in great distress; "oh, Florence, I think I must walk back, do stop the coachman."

"My dear child," said Florence, laughing heartily, "what a fuss you do make; why, what can your mamma say if you tell her you didn't get her letter in time? Come, do not look so dismal, there's Alice waiting for us on the steps, she'll wonder what's the matter with you."

"Oh, Florence," Hetty replied, "you oughtn't to have played me this trick." But Florence paid no attention to her reproach, and the next minute Hetty was obliged to try and forget her vexation, and to return a smiling answer to Miss Benson's ecstatic greeting.

"You've managed splendidly, Flo," said her sister, as she led the two girls upstairs to take off their things. "I was half afraid, from your note, that you wouldn't be able to come, but I thought I'd send the carriage to see. And how did the old lady bear it? Was she very cross?"

"Bad enough," said Florence; and then the two sisters began to talk of the various people whom they were expecting in the evening, while Hetty alternately listened to their conversation, and wished herself back again in the school-room at The Croft.

She had read her mother's letter very rapidly, but one sentence had taken firm hold of her mind, and made her feel restless and uncomfortable. "I am afraid you will be very much disappointed," Mrs. Brewster wrote, "but I am sure, dear Hetty, you would never really desire to go anywhere against my wishes." What would her mother say if she could see her then? For though Hetty tried to fancy that the whole blame lay on Florence, it was impossible to persuade herself that she had not

known all the while that her mother would disapprove of her being with the Bensons.

Nevertheless, seeing there was no help for it now, by degrees Hetty forgot her annoyance, and joined as well as she could in the talk of Florence and her brothers and sister.

I say as well as she could, for in her quiet home Hetty had never been thrown among people of the stamp she now met with, and at first the constant flow of jokes and badinage completely bewildered her. Florence watched her with much amusement, and when the two girls were dressing for dinner in Florence's room, she patronizingly told her friend that she thought she had got on very well.

"I think school makes one very stupid," replied Hetty, as she carefully unfolded the evening dress she had brought with her, and secretly wondered whether Miss Benson would think it very simple and childish. "I'm afraid your brothers must have thought I was half asleep."

"Oh, never mind; they're so used to our chatter, for Alice and I are such rattles, that I think they admire you all the more for looking shy and modest. Now let me see how these crimson roses look in your hair. Keep still. Oh, lovely! Why, Hetty, you will create quite a sensation this evening."

"Nonsense, Florry," replied Hetty, struggling to free herself from Florence's grasp; "and I don't like to wear flowers. Mamma wouldn't like it. You know I'm not grown up."

Florence laughed. "Of course I know that," she said; "but that is no reason why you shouldn't wear flowers in your hair, or appear at a quiet evening party; and, to tell you the truth, my dear, your dress is so charmingly innocent, that you positively must submit to a little extra adornment. Come, sit down, and let Greene do your hair, while I admire and suggest improvements."

Hetty complied, though with some inward vexation; for, though Florence kept up a constant fire of compliments, she could not help thinking that her usual style of coiffure was much prettier than the fashionable erection that the skilful hands of the maid built up on her head.

So, too, thought Miss Benson, when coming into the room to see if her sister was ready, Florence called upon her to add her testimony that her young guest looked charming: for Miss Benson had too much good taste not to see that a simpler style of dress would be more becoming to the round girlish face and figure. "Very nice, indeed," she said, "only a little too much colour, I think;" and Hetty was greatly relieved to find several of the dark crimson roses that the maid

had scattered over her white dress taken off, and her thick bands of hair pressed closer together, till they looked much more as she was used to wear them.

Florence at first remonstrated, but when Alice drew back, and said, "There, is not that better?" she gave a ready assent, and hoped that Hetty now felt quite comfortable.

"Not quite," Hetty would have said, had she spoken the truth; for all these discussions concerning her dress, as well as the brilliant appearance of Miss Benson and her sister, made her feel more shy than ever. She could almost have fancied she was dreaming when, some hours after, she found herself sitting on an ottoman in the splendidly-furnished drawing-room, surrounded by such a gaily-dressed assemblage as she had never seen before. The whirl and the bustle tired her, and she was beginning to wonder whether it was not nearly time for them to be returning to Mrs. Travers, when she felt a hand placed on her shoulder, and, turning round, saw Miss Benson standing beside her, with a gentleman whose face she recognized at once.

"Hetty, dear, this gentleman wishes to be introduced to you; he says he knows your father," said Miss Benson, as Hetty rose at her approach. "Dr. Weston—Miss Brewster;" and then, with a

smile, and a hope that she did not feel the room too warm, Miss Benson turned away to speak to some one else.

Hetty's head seemed all in a whirl. Dr. Weston would tell her father where he had seen her, was her first thought; she had hoped he would not hear, but now there was no chance of such a thing; but Dr. Weston was speaking, and she roused herself to attend to what he said.

"You are the very image of your father," he was saying; "I guessed your name directly I saw you. I had no idea you were intimate with the Bensons; are you staying here?"

"Oh, no," Hetty replied, "I am only here for the evening; I am staying in the neighbourhood." She did not like to add I am at school in the neighbourhood, for full of the conviction that she had quite attained the period of young-ladydom, to call herself a school-girl was, to say the least, unpleasant. Then, to change the subject, she inquired, "Have you seen papa lately?"

"Yes, I met him last week; he looks well. I think hard work seems to suit him; he would have sent a message to you if he had known I was going to meet his daughter so soon. Shall I have the pleasure of bearing one to him? I shall see him again on Tuesday next."

"On Tuesday?" Hetty replied, and the doctor

noticed with some surprise and perplexity, a look of annoyance pass over her face.

"Yes, on Tuesday; are you jealous of me?" he inquired; "are you pining to get home? Oh, I remember now, your father told me that his eldest daughter was at school somewhere near here—that is yourself, I presume."

"Yes," replied Hetty, hesitatingly, "and Florence Benson is a schoolfellow of mine; we are great friends. Here is Florence."

Florence shook hands with Dr. Weston, then turning to Hetty, said, "Hetty, Alice says you must play again; we've so few musical people this evening, or I wouldn't tease you so."

"Oh, Florence, I can't really. I would much rather not, tell your sister so."

"Oh, don't be silly, you played 'Midnight Chimes' beautifully; Ralph said so, and he's a great critic. Play the 'Wedding March' now, and put the pedals down and make a noise, unmusical people always like a noise."

Hetty moved towards the piano, and Florence, who was by no means fond of Dr. Weston, and a good deal afraid of him, followed her.

The doctor watched them. "Poor little thing," he said to himself, "what a pity she should be much in such a house as this, a silly empty-headed set they all are; I wouldn't let a girl of mine come here

at all. I should have thought Brewster had more sense; a nice simple girl enough she looks, but she's had more flattery than is good for her to-night."

"Oh, pray don't get up, Miss Brewster," exclaimed Ralph Benson, as the "Wedding March" having been brought to a conclusion, Hetty was leaving the piano groaning and reverberating from the one end to the other; "do play something else; we haven't such another performer in the room; it's perfect cruelty to play such shabby pieces. Here, what's this?" he added, turning over her music; "'Auf Flugeln des Gesanges'; oh! that is my favourite air; you really must play that." Then as Hetty blushing and smiling, complied, he muttered to himself, "Never heard it in my life before, I believe."

"Hetty," whispered Florence in her ear as she rose from the piano, "do you know it's past eleven, we shan't be at The Croft till nearly twelve. We must slip out at once; the carriage is getting ready. Oh, you can't say good-bye to Alice, she's busy; come quick."

The next few minutes were spent in exchanging their white dresses for their ordinary attire, and then the carriage-door closed upon them, and the bright scene disappeared from their view. Going back to school and lessons, how cold and miserable it

sounded ; how dull and cheerless the old house would look ; how stupid and uninteresting the girls would seem, how cross and unkind the governess would look after all the bright sights and sounds, merry talk, smiles, and pleasant words in which Hetty had been basking for the last two or three hours.

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING SATISFIES.

Nay, 'tis not what we fancied it,
This magic world of ours;
We thought its skies were only blue,
Its fields all sun and flowers.

But clouds came up with gloom and shade,
Our sky was overcast;
The hot mist threw its blight around,
Sunshine and flowers went past.

BONAR.

It was hardly to be wondered at that, considering the excitement of the day before, and the late hour at which she laid her head on the pillow, Hetty should awake the next morning with a violent headache.

Mrs. Travers was not surprised, but she refrained from making any allusion to the promise they had given when she saw Hetty's pale cheeks and languid eyes. "If she did wrong, my dear, she has punished herself," she observed to Miss Travers; "but I should like to know how they

spent their time. However, perhaps it's best to ask no questions."

Miss Travers thought so too; often suffering from ill-health herself, she knew by experience how hard it is, when in pain, to bear the slightest word of reproach; how quick the mind is, when the body is suffering, to catch the infection, and thrill with equal anguish. She knew, too, that even silence has a tongue, and that by refraining to reproach when reproof is expected, the heart is often more moved than by many words of severe warning.

Florence prophesied that they should get a lecture from Miss Travers at the Bible lesson which they had with her on Sunday mornings. "She will give us some good advice concerning the impropriety of keeping late hours, and as no doubt she has imagined that we were very improperly employed yesterday evening, probably we shall be warned against worldly amusements—dancing, flirting, and so forth. I hope that you will listen well, Hetty, and comprehend that if such remarks do occur in the course of the lecture, they are certainly intended for us."

Hetty smiled; but as Miss Travers entered the room before Florence had quite finished what she was saying, there was no time for any reply.

"I think you had better go and lie down on the

sofa in the drawing-room," Miss Travers remarked, as Hetty took her usual place at the table, and opened her Bible; "you will be quite undisturbed there; and as you certainly are not fit to go to church, I should advise you to try and go to sleep, and then, when you wake, perhaps your headache will have taken its departure. I will come and take a peep at you before I go to church."

Hetty gladly complied with this suggestion, and when Miss Travers came, according to promise, to see her before going to church, the heavy eyelids were closed, and Hetty was, to all appearance, in a sound sleep.

"It will do her good, and a little quiet time to herself, if she wakes, will do her good too," said Miss Travers to herself, as she gently closed the door, thinking what pleasant hours and useful lessons she had had when kept by ill-health from attending church, and left alone in the quiet of the Sabbath to commune with God and with her own heart.

And Hetty did wake, but not to pleasant thoughts or peaceful happiness; in fact, the peace and quiet of the scene before her, as she lay and gazed on the lovely view from the drawing-room window, only served to awaken unpleasant thoughts within her. She felt restless and discontented; the taste she had had of gay life had made her feel

thoroughly indisposed to settle down to school life again. What was the use, she asked herself, of taking so much pains to learn history, geography, languages, etc., when nobody would ever find out that you knew anything about them? Alice and Florence Benson were constantly in society, and what good did all their lessons do them? Would they not have been just as happy and just as much liked if they had never learned a word of German or French? She felt sure they would; and yet Hetty said to herself that she was not sure whether she should like to be quite like Alice or Florence. They were not quite what she had always intended to be, though she could hardly tell what was lacking. They were not religious, certainly, but no doubt they would be, some day. Florence always said that it was all very well for people who were too old for fun to be religious.

So Hetty's thoughts flowed on, from one thing to another, till at last they came to her conversation with Dr. Weston, and she began wondering, for the twentieth time, whether he would be likely to remember to mention her to her papa. For a long time she hesitated whether she should write and confess that she had been at the Bensons', saying that she had not received her mother's letter till after she had started, or whether she should wait and see whether Dr. Weston forgot her or not.

After a long time, she decided on the latter course, saying to herself that Dr. Weston looked like an absent man, and would probably have quite forgotten her existence by that time. Whether this was the case we shall see by a peep into the drawing-room of Mr. Brewster's house on the Tuesday evening after the Saturday alluded to in the last chapter.

It had been a day of more than usual work and anxiety to the doctor, and though he joined his wife in the drawing-room soon after dinner, he seemed so worn out and exhausted that she refrained from all attempts to draw him into conversation, hoping that he might fall asleep in his easy-chair. Apparently he did not care to do so, for after silently watching her at her work for more than half an hour, he was rising to fetch a book when a violent ring was heard, and in a minute or two a footman entered the room with a small twisted note, which he handed to his master, saying, "The servant is waiting," so the doctor read it in silence, then saying, "Tell the man I will come in about an hour," he gave the note to his wife.

"From Annette Forbes, oh! her sister is going on well, as far as she can tell, then you needn't go there again to-night, I am so glad."

"No, you see at the end she says that she should be glad if I would see her again to-night."

"Oh, how tiresome; if she is sleeping quietly, she must be going on all right; how stupid people are. But how glad I am she seems improving, aren't you; you hardly thought she would rally, did you?"

"I thought she might, but Weston didn't; he was very desponding. Poor thing, I shall be glad indeed if she is spared, for her sister's sake, they are so devoted to each other."

"Was it Dr. Weston you called in? Dear me, what a long time it is since I saw him; you have not seen much of him lately, have you, Edward?"

"Not for the last year or two. But he told me something to-day that I would rather not have heard."

"That is what has made you so gloomy, then. I thought you were worrying about Lucy Forbes; what is it?"

"He was spending the evening at Mr. Benson's on Saturday, the father of Hetty's friend, you know, and he says he met Hetty there."

"Why, I told her not to go!" exclaimed Mrs. Brewster, "what could she have been thinking of. Are you sure he wasn't mistaken, Edward?"

"I'm afraid not, he was introduced to her, and wonderfully struck with her likeness to me. Are you sure you posted your letter in time; she would hardly venture to go when you had refused your consent."

"I am quite sure, Edward. Oh, I am sure that girl Florence must be doing her a great deal of harm, or she would never have directly disobeyed me."

"If your letter was not in time for the post, she may have chosen to fancy that silence gives consent; but she ought to have known better, for I told her distinctly when she was at home that I did not wish her to accept any invitation to the Bensons' house."

"My letter *was* in time, for I posted it when I went out before lunch," said Mrs. Brewster, sadly.

"Weston says," replied Mr. Brewster, "that he should not let any of his daughters visit there, and he was greatly surprised to see Hetty there. It seems to have been a regular evening party. I wonder Mrs. Travers did not put a stop to it."

Mrs. Brewster made no reply, and shortly after her husband left the room and started to pay the promised visit. The time of his absence was passed in anxious thought, partly for Hetty and partly for the poor invalid who had just been undergoing a terrible operation. She was a personal friend of Mrs. Brewster's, and the doctor's anxiety and interest in his patient was, therefore, fully shared by his wife.

It seemed a long time before he returned, but when he did, it was with a cheerful light in his eyes, that told his good news before he spoke.

"She is going on well," said Mrs. Brewster, reading the information in his face, "oh, I am so glad."

"Yes, I'm quite in spirits about her," replied the doctor, "she's far better and less prostrate than I had dared to hope. Poor Annette could hardly speak, she seemed so thankful."

Mrs. Brewster was silent, it seemed hard to remind her husband of the other source of anxiety which was oppressing her, and yet there was still one question which she longed to ask. The doctor, however, returned to the subject of his own accord. "I have been thinking about Hetty," he said, "and it seems to me that as the Christmas holidays are so near, it will perhaps be better not to allude to her misdemeanour till she comes home. It is of course out of the question that the Bensons should repeat their invitation in the next three weeks, and therefore we may safely take no notice of the matter till she comes home."

"And she will fancy we know nothing about it," said Mrs. Brewster; "it is the second time this term that she has shown an inclination to disregard our wishes, Edward."

"You are thinking of her trick about the Latin, Harriet; well, we can settle that matter too before she goes back next term. That Miss Benson is to leave at Christmas, is she not?"

"Yes, and I am glad of it; but, Edward, are you quite convinced that we had better send Hetty back again? I am half inclined to think I was mistaken in thinking school would do her good."

"You have no fault to find with the school, have you?"

"No, certainly not. I like all I have seen of Mrs. and Miss Travers extremely, and no doubt Ada is greatly improved since she went, but still it does not seem to suit Hetty. You know they may not quite understand her."

"I think we can hardly tell yet, we must give the present plan a longer trial before we adopt a new one, and perhaps in a little while Mrs. Travers may understand her better, or Hetty may understand Mrs. Travers better, and somehow things may become smoother."

Mrs. Brewster was hardly satisfied with this decision; during her husband's absence she had resolved in her own mind that the best plan would be to remove Hetty from school, and try to finish her education herself, with the help of masters, and remembering that when she first proposed the school plan to her husband, he had made several objections to it, she fancied he would readily consent to her wish to try home education once more. But the doctor was a cautious man, and greatly disliked being hurried into changing his plans, and Mrs.

Brewster knowing this full well, forbore to press her wishes, and lived in hopes that when Christmas came, he might see reason to agree with her.

Meanwhile the Christmas holidays were fast approaching, already many of the girls at The Croft had begun to count the days, and I believe that little Nellie, who had a peculiar taste for arithmetic, spent much of her play time in reckoning how many hours, quarters of hours, and minutes still remained before she should be fetched home by the three maiden aunts with whom she always spent her holidays.

Florence's face grew brighter every day as the period of release, as she called it, drew nearer, but Hetty looked very doleful when she thought of parting with her friend, nor could Florence's promises of writing constantly avail to cheer her.

"I wish my time was up too," she said frequently; "just think what school will be like when you are gone, Florry?"

"It will be a perfect paradise, I assure you. I verily believe that Mrs. Travers is counting the days to the holidays as eagerly as I am, simply because she will get rid of me then. I believe we perfectly hate each other. Oh! that reminds me, Hetty, papa says I am to make her a handsome present before I leave, and he wants to know what he shall send. What shall I say?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Hetty, "but why

should you give her a present if you dislike her so much? I shouldn't think she'd care for anything you gave her."

"No, I don't suppose she will, but papa wishes it, and I don't care. I expect he has a dim idea that I've been a perfect torment to her, and he wishes to show his gratitude to her for putting up with me so long."

"Well, then, *he* should give her something, and not you, Florence."

"I wish he would, but I suppose he won't. Only one thing I'm determined, I won't present my gift in person; it will give the old lady such a splendid opportunity of bestowing on me a parting lecture."

"I'd put up with a lecture an hour long to be going for good this Christmas, Flo," said Hetty, the tears gathering in her eyes. "It will be perfectly unbearable here next term without you; why, I shan't have a creature to speak to."

"You'll have your old friend Ada," replied Florence. "Really I'm afraid I've made you treat her rather badly since you came to school. That was why I pretended to want her to come with us to Northend, the Saturday before last. Wasn't I on thorns though for fear she should come?"

"I couldn't think why you asked her," replied Hetty, "but she doesn't care for me now; she likes Bertha or Maggie better than me."

"Well, then, you must make friends with one of the steady ones, and learn your lessons properly as they do, and keep all the rules and talk no nonsense."

"Don't be absurd, Florence, just as if you could imagine that I could get on with Ella Wharton, who thinks it's a perfect crime to copy anybody else's exercise, or with Agnes, who seemed perfectly horrified at your reading that novel your brother lent you, because Miss Travers said it wasn't fit for any young lady to read, or even with Maggie and Bertha, who have some fun in them, though it's a very queer kind."

"Well," said Florence, "I heard a rumour that two new girls were coming after Christmas, perhaps you'll like them; they are sisters, I believe."

"Oh, then they'll be devoted to each other, and care for nobody else. I wish mamma would let me leave school, I hate it."

"Do you, Hetty; why, you don't look so very bad," exclaimed Bertha, who overheard this last remark. It was Saturday evening, and the girls were most of them sitting over the school-room fire, while Florence and Hetty, in order to be quiet, had retired to the children's school-room, at the farther end of which Bertha was busy writing letters.

"Yes, I do hate it," repeated Hetty, looking rather uneasily at the speaker, as if she feared that she

might have overheard some of their previous conversation. "I perfectly detest the idea of coming back next term."

Bertha looked surprised, and a good deal vexed. "But, why, what's the matter?" she inquired, bending and twisting her pen between her fingers till the quill cracked and split up a good deal higher than she had anticipated.

"What's the matter?" repeated Hetty, impatiently? "why, isn't it frightfully dull here. I'm sure there's nothing but lessons, lessons from morning till night; and next term there won't be a creature here I care about."

A half smile crossed Bertha's face, as she lounged back in her chair examining her ruined pen; but it passed away as she looked up, saying, "I'm afraid we've not been so sociable as we ought to have been, Hetty, or you wouldn't feel so dull as you seem to. Why, though there certainly is nothing much but lessons to do from morning till evening, I don't often feel dull; but then I've been here a good long time—it's almost like home to me."

"Not so long as I have, Bertha," said Florence; "I came two terms before you did."

"Yes, I know; but I've been here a year and a half—that's a good long time."

"I think," said Florence, after a pause, "that there are some girls who never can get on at school;

and Hetty and I are two of those girls ; it's our misfortune, not our fault."

Again Bertha seemed inclined to laugh ; but she checked herself, and merely said, " It's a great misfortune certainly."

There was an awkward silence after this speech, and Bertha was beginning to look for another pen with which to conclude her letter, when Hetty observed, " I shall certainly try and persuade mamma to let me leave school ; I am positive it was a great mistake sending me.

Down went Bertha's pen again, this time blotting her letter shamefully ; but she took no notice. " Dear Hetty," she said, " I'm sure we must have been unkind to you, or you would have got to like us better by this time. But I do hope you'll come back next term ; I'm sure we shall all be sorry if you don't."

Hetty looked surprised. " I'd no idea you'd care the least in the world whether I was at school or at home, alive or dead," she said ; " I don't see why you should."

" Why," said Bertha, laughing, " my principle is the more the merrier ; and if you leave, there'll be one less to laugh and make a noise ; and I can't live without a noise. We shall miss Florence very much in that way too."

" You'll be very glad to miss me, I expect,"

remarked Florence; "and so will Mrs. Travers too."

"You are both fishing for compliments this evening in the most barefaced way," replied Bertha; "so I shall let you think what you choose, Florence; and of course I can't answer for Mrs. Travers, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if your people at home get quite tired of you before the holidays are over, and humbly intreat Mrs. Travers to take you back again."

"No fear," said Florence, "once free they won't easily cage me again. Besides, they can't get on without one lady at home; and Alice means to be married in February, you know."

"There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," replied Bertha, merrily. "Who knows what may happen before the Christmas holidays are over! I shan't be surprised at anything."

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW LEAF.

*No joy so great but runneth to an end,
No hap so hard but may in fine amend.*

R. SOUTHWELL.

"AND are all the girls come back?" inquired Hetty, as she and Ada took off their hats and jackets in the large bed-room at The Croft, while Maggie and Bertha helped them, and gave scraps of news, such as we always like to hear when we have been separated from our friends. The Christmas holidays were over, and they were back again at Mrs. Travers'; and Maggie and Bertha, who had arrived before them, were vieing with each other which could give them the warmest welcome.

"No," answered Bertha to Hetty's question; "only we two and the two new girls. Do you know, Ada, all the bed-room arrangements have been altered. I am going to sleep with Agnes in the opposite room, and Josephine is going to have my bed in the same room with the new girls."

"And Ella is coming up here," cried Maggie "won't it be splendid!" Then, seeing that neither of the girls seemed particularly interested in this piece of news, she inquired if they had seen the new girls.

"No," replied Hetty; "what are they like?"

Maggie looked at Bertha, who laughed, and answered, "Well, we thought them very odd, but perhaps you won't; but I wouldn't advise you to look at them much, for the eldest has very sharp eyes, and fixes them on you in a most singular way. They seem to be under the impression that everybody is quizzing them, and looking out for an opportunity of making fun of them."

"How queer!" exclaimed Ada; "what are their names?"

"Evelyn and Clara Dunmow," replied Maggie. "They are in very deep mourning, and Clara seems in great trouble. I daresay she doesn't like coming to school. You'll see them at tea-time. Hetty, how tired you look; let me unpack for you."

"Oh, no, thank you, I'm not tired," replied Hetty; "I'd rather be doing something;" and Maggie did not urge her, for she saw the tears gathering in her eyes, and guessed that returning to school seemed rather melancholy this time to Hetty. In fact, on their way to school that day—for they had travelled together—Bertha had told

Maggie of the conversation she had had with Florence and Hetty at the end of the last quarter, and of the dislike Hetty had expressed to school life altogether, and the two girls had agreed to endeavour to make her more comfortable, blaming themselves a good deal for not having been more sociable in times past.

"It is so selfish to be content with being happy and comfortable ourselves," Maggie had said, "and not take any trouble to find out whether other people get on as well; but, Bertha, Hetty will never really like school unless she takes more pains with her lessons; it is so miserable to be always grumbled at."

"I should think so," replied Bertha; "it always used to astonish me to see how coolly Florence took it. But I pity Hetty; she will feel very lonely this term."

Bertha was not mistaken. Hetty had very seldom felt so thoroughly down-hearted and out of spirits as she did the first evening of this her third quarter at school. The holidays had been pleasant ones; for, though Florence's letters, on which she had counted so much, were shorter and less interesting than she had expected, she was a great deal with Ada again; she had been with her mamma to several concerts and small parties, and, till the evening before her return to school, nothing had

been said about her conduct with regard to the Latin lessons or the visit to Northend.

"Of course, Dr. Weston had forgotten to mention his meeting with her," she thought; and, as days passed on, and nothing was said, she no longer felt any uneasiness when the Bensons' name was mentioned, or started when her father alluded to Dr. Weston.

She was therefore a good deal surprised, when, having gone to say good-night to her father in his study, the last evening of the holidays, Mr. Brewster detained her, saying he had one or two things to talk to her about before she went back to school. Hetty had always been a good deal afraid of her father, and at these alarming words would gladly have escaped, had it been possible; but, as that was out of the question, she began hurriedly to collect her thoughts, and to determine what answer she should make to the questions she felt sure were coming. Greatly to her surprise, however, her father asked no questions, but merely spoke in a grave, sad way of the disappointment he felt that the good resolutions with which she had begun her school life seemed all to be forgotten, that instead of setting to work earnestly and heartily to make the most of her present advantages, she had, as far as he could judge, only thought how she could get through school-time with the least possible trouble to herself.

"He was grieved and ashamed of her," he said; "but that was not the worst;" and then he alluded to the evening at the Bensons', of which Hetty had fondly hoped he knew nothing, and to the way in which she had tried to avoid obeying his wishes about learning Latin—still in the same quiet tone, and with the same grave manner, which awed Hetty into quietness, and seemed to paralyse her tongue when she tried to excuse herself.

A long silence followed when he ceased speaking. The doctor was waiting, expecting that Hetty would have numberless excuses to urge in her own behalf; but, no, Hetty was silent: for, while she stood in considerable awe of him, Hetty had always loved her father with all the strength of a very warm heart; she had always intended to please him by giving him reason to be proud of her; and to hear him say he was ashamed of her, stung her more deeply than any other expression would have done. He might have said he was angry, vexed, or disappointed, and she would have cared comparatively little; but that he should be ashamed of her, his eldest, and, as she had always fancied herself, his favourite child, was more than she could bear. That he had reason to be, she knew full well, and this knowledge choked every excuse ere it could be uttered.

The tears were in her eyes when Mr. Brewster,

after waiting some time for a reply, said, in a different tone, "Well, Hetty, have I said enough, or must I say that you must leave school and come home, because mamma and I cannot trust you out of our sight?"

"No, papa," replied Hetty, resolutely but rather proudly withal, "I can do my lessons, and I will; you shall not have to be ashamed of me again."

"Very well, I am glad to hear it. But, Hetty," and her father drew her in front of him and looked earnestly at her glowing face, "'can and will' sound hopeful, but they would sound much more so to my ear if spoken more gently and humbly. Your good resolutions have failed more than once, and why, because you depended on your own strength, which proved to be, as we have seen, perfect weakness. But we've talked long enough; go to bed, but don't forget your promise."

It was with these words still fresh in her mind that Hetty returned to school the next day, and it was the remembrance of them that brought the shadow over her face that Maggie had noticed, and which even the interest inspired by the arrival of the new girls could not altogether dispel.

But a few days passed away, and Hetty's spirits soon threw off the weight that oppressed them. The promise and resolution she had made were not, however, forgotten; with no one to tempt her away

from her studies, with Maggie, Bertha, and even the demure Ella ever ready and eager to lend their help, matters seemed much more promising, and Mrs. Travers began to think that Hetty had turned over a new leaf, and to hope that now Florence was gone she might form a friendship with some one of the more industrious among her companions.

But now that she was really endeavouring to do her work without the aid of the many ingenious devices by which Florence had taught her to help herself, Hetty began to feel considerable inconvenience from her past neglect. To write exercises simply with the usual help allowed, was doubly hard when all the preceding ones had been done under very different circumstances; and it was, therefore, not to be wondered at that even with thorough application and perseverance, her lessons took her twice as long as some of her companions. Nor would she have persevered had not her father's words been constantly in her mind, added to which was the dread of being thought an ignoramus by the newly arrived pupils. More than once had she already caught a glance of surprise and contempt pass between Evelyn Dunmow and her sister when a question came to her turn which she was unable to answer; for to be thought lazy was, in Hetty's opinion, far less intolerable than to appear stupid. How few of us can bear contempt; that curl of

Evelyn's lip, that slightly sarcastic tone in which she asked Hetty to push the ink towards her, gave rise to a feeling of dislike in the latter's breast such as she had seldom known.

This feeling was uppermost in her thoughts when on hearing Ada remark to Maggie one evening when they were undressing for bed, that she thought Evelyn was very clever, she added, impetuously, "At all events she thinks herself so, that's plain enough;" an exclamation which made all the three girls turn round, while Ella asked abruptly "What made her say such a thing?"

Hetty was silent for a minute, not exactly knowing how to prove the charge she had brought against Evelyn, but seeing that Ella was about to speak again she answered, "That it was so plain, she thought everybody must have noticed it."

"I haven't," replied Ella. "I like Evelyn, I think she's one of the nicest girls I've seen for a long time."

"She's very pretty," said Ada, "and so is Clara; don't you think so, Hetty?"

"No, not at all. I dislike those pink and white people with hair like yellow floss silk; they're not to my taste at all."

"You like dark people, like Florence," remarked Ada. "Well, I think I like Evelyn's face better, but of course it's a matter of taste."

"Perhaps you like her expression too," said Hetty, almost bitterly, "especially when she turns up that pretty lip of hers, and opens her eyes languidly to show her superiority to all around her."

Ada was silent, and Ella, who sometimes seemed to have an unhappy faculty of roughly pulling open a scarcely closed wound, exclaimed abruptly, "Oh, you are thinking of that unlucky question Miss Travers asked you to-day; but, Hetty, you really must have known who Queen Elizabeth's mother was. No wonder Evelyn was surprised at your ignorance."

Hetty's cheek flushed, and she was about to answer angrily, that whether she knew or not was nobody's business but her own, when Ada interposed, saying gently, "I know. Hetty knew quite well, but sometimes everything seems to go out of one's head, at least out of mine, I mean."

"And mine, too, Ada," said Maggie, laughing. "I sometimes think my head is constructed on the sieve principle: things I read go straight through it."

"I should have thought the sieve principle precisely the best one for the construction of heads," replied Ella; "you surely don't want to keep all the rubbish you read in your head, and the sieve retains all that's worth keeping, you know."

"Much obliged to you, my dear, for the compliment contained in your speech—namely, that I

read a vast quantity of rubbish. But you're wrong, in some cases the sieve retains the rubbish we mean to throw away. But rubbish or not, here comes Mademoiselle, and Ella, dear old pet, you'll pay for your impertinence by getting to bed in the dark."

"Miss Evelyn knows very little German," thought Hetty to herself, as the candle disappeared, and silence reigned in the large bed-room; "and I've nearly done my exercise and translation. She will be astonished if Herr Reinhardt makes any complimentary speeches, as I should think he is pretty sure to do. He said something last time about my getting on better now I had not Miss Benson to help or hinder me; how rude of him; and yet, I do believe, I do my lessons better without Florence, dull though it is. Heigh ho, I'd much rather be a dunce, if only I had not promised papa to work like a slave. Well, school won't last for ever, that's one comfort."

Herr Reinhardt, the German master, was a great favourite with most of his pupils—in fact, Florence and Hetty were the only exceptions; and even they could not plead as an excuse for their dislike, that he was either cross or unjust. Strict he certainly was, quick to detect anything like slovenliness in preparation or inattention to his instructions; but his good temper, courtesy, and patience had never yet been known to fail. Those of his pupils who were conscious of having done their best might rest as-

sured of no hard judgment, even if their success had not equalled their wishes, even if they might not obtain the "gut, gut, recht gut," that was the verdict they longed for.

Possibly, Hetty trusted too much to the unfailing good temper of the German master, when she hoped to obtain some compliments from him which would astonish and annoy Evelyn Dunmow, and did not put forth all her powers in preparing for him. At any rate she was very smiling and self-satisfied when having waited till her turn came, she laid her exercise before him. Now it so happened that Hetty's place at the table during the German lesson was exactly opposite to that occupied by Evelyn, who sat at the master's right hand, while she, Hetty, was on the left. Beginning therefore with Evelyn, Herr Reinhardt corrected the exercises of his pupils one after another, so reaching Hetty the last. So certain did the latter feel that her exercise was better done than usual, and that her translation and grammar were passably prepared, that instead of busying herself as she might have done in revising the one, or perfecting the other, she passed the time of waiting in drawing little figures on the cover of her exercise book, and so busy was she with this interesting employment, that she never observed the master's eye from time to time fixed upon her with evident disapproval.

Still he made no remark when she laid the exercise before him, nor even when mistake after mistake became evident, only the sharp thick dashes of his pen through the incorrect words showed his annoyance and displeasure. Hetty began to grow uneasy, and glancing round on her companions, perceived that Maggie's face was flushed with anxiety, and even Ella's grave face looked graver than usual, as if she foreboded a coming storm. And it came.

"Oh, this will not do at all," exclaimed Herr Reinhardt, as he pressed the blotting-paper on the exercise, and handed it back to the now blushing Hetty. "Last time I thought we were going to do better; but again this is bad, shockingly bad. Really, Fraulein, you had better not learn German at all, than learn it in this way; it is nothing but waste of time." Then fearing he was growing too severe, the kind-hearted man added, "What, is it so terribly difficult? the other young ladies do not say so. I'm afraid the fault is in yourself—not enough perseverance; but nothing can be done in this world without perseverance, nothing at all, Fraulein. I do not like to scold; but it is not right for me to let you waste your time like this. I think you had better give it up at once, and say you cannot learn German, it is too hard; do you not think so, Fraulein?" Then as Hetty shook her head indignantly, for vexation that Evelyn should hear her thus reprov-
ed, and

real disappointment were so near producing tears, that she dared not trust herself to speak, he continued, "What, it is not so? you still wish to continue; very well then, we must work harder. Try and get some more perseverance.—lazy people cannot learn German, it is much too difficult; but now that Fraulein Benson is gone, you will not like to be the only idle one in the class. No, I see you will not." Hetty's tears were by this time overflowing. "Now, your poetry, Fraulein," he continued, turning to Bertha; and the lesson went forward as usual. How gladly would Hetty have rushed away to her own room; but shame kept her in her place. She had caught one glance from Evelyn, when by chance she lifted her glowing face—a glance of superiority and pity, Hetty thought it; and she instantly resolved to sit still and look as if she didn't care. It was not easy, the lesson seemed twice as long as usual. If Herr Reinhardt had only been cross to any one else, it would have been some comfort; but he was as kind and gentle as usual; and when he next spoke to her, it was in his ordinary manner, so that she had no excuse for the rude way in which she answered him.

At last it was over, and Hetty flew to her room, there to give way to a passion of sobs and tears. She would never try again to do her lessons well, no, never; it was no use, people were only all the

more cross and disagreeable ; her parents were cruel to send her to such a place, she would write and tell them so, and much more to the same effect. She was still sobbing and crying, but more quietly, for her passion had somewhat spent itself, when a soft foot-step crossed the floor, and the next minute Hetty felt an arm thrown round her neck. Her first impulse was to push it off, but its soft touch felt so pleasant just when she had been telling herself that no one cared for her, that she let it remain ; and when Ada's sweet voice said tremulously, " Don't cry, Hetty, oh, don't, it makes me so miserable to see you," she made some effort to check her sobs, and to dry her eyes.

But the next minute she broke down again, when Ada said, " What makes you so unhappy, Hetty dear ; everybody gets scolded sometimes, and he didn't mean to be unkind."

" Not before everybody like that," sobbed Hetty ; " before Evelyn and Clara, and just when I had been trying to do my lessons better. Oh, it is so hard."

" Maggie said so," replied Ada, " she said it was a pity, but, of course. Herr Reinhardt could not know that."

" He might have seen," said Hetty, sullenly ; " but it doesn't signify. I shan't try any more, my lessons may go on as they like now."

"Oh, Hetty!" exclaimed Ada, "you don't mean that."

"Yes, I do; why should you be so surprised; what's the use of taking pains if nobody finds it out?"

"Somebody does," said Ada, gravely, "and everybody will in time. Oh, Hetty, surely we don't do our lessons only to please our masters."

"You don't, Ada," replied Hetty, mournfully.

"And you don't, either," said Ada, coaxingly; "you know you liked what Miss Travers said on Sunday about our serving God in our daily life, by doing everything to his glory. I think it makes lessons so much easier when we know that; I mean when we think that our Saviour is glorified by our doing them well."

"You think so because you love Him, Ada," said Hetty, sadly.

"Of course, and so do you," replied Ada, with a happy smile on her face.

Hetty shook her head, then rising, she remarked that she supposed she must go downstairs again; and taking up her sponge, she began bathing her face to get rid of the traces of tears.

CHAPTER XII.

SICKNESS.

Thou shalt have joy in sadness soon,
The pure, calm hope be thine,
Which brightens like the eastern moon,
As day's wild lights decline.

KEBLE.

"I don't know how it is," remarked Hetty to Bertha Wood, one Sunday evening, when they two were alone in the school-room, while the others were at church. Bertha had been suffering from toothache, and Hetty had been complaining of headache and weariness for some days past, and had gladly consented to stay at home and keep Bertha company. "I don't know how it is, but I think I have an extraordinary and most disagreeable faculty of discovering the unpleasant parts of a person's nature. Is it not strange that you can all of you get on with Evelyn except me?"

Bertha threw down the book she had been appearing to read for some time, saying, "There, I'm glad you are going to talk, I can't read, and I'm so tired of all the books here. I thought you were

half asleep, or not inclined to talk, or gloomy, or something."

"I am half asleep and gloomy, and something else too, but I don't exactly know what," replied Hetty; "I feel so odd I can't think what's the matter with me. Do you know, Bertha, I was so glad you were going to be at home to-night. I felt so queer and nervous, I positively couldn't have stayed at home by myself."

"The servants would have been at home; at least old cook would," replied Bertha; "but what makes you so nervous?"

"I don't know, that's just what seems so strange. But about Evelyn, Bertha, do you really mean to say you like her, or is it only that you think it is wrong to say you dislike anybody?"

"I don't either like or dislike her particularly," replied Bertha; "I don't trouble myself about her; she doesn't come in my way at all."

"No, she doesn't constantly assume airs of superiority towards you," said Hetty, gloomily; "what would you do if she did?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," answered Bertha, laughing; "I don't think I should trouble myself much about it if she did. I haven't such a vast opinion of her judgment as to think it of much consequence whether she likes or dislikes me."

"You take the world so easily, Bertha,"

sighed Hetty, "nothing ever seems to trouble you much."

"I don't know whether you mean that for a compliment or not, Hetty, but you seem rather in a doleful state of mind to-night; let's talk of something more interesting than Evelyn and her ways and doings. Your old friend, Ada, for instance, what a dear little thing she is!"

"A head and shoulders taller than you, Bertha," said Hetty, smiling.

"Possibly; but if she's tall, I'm fat. But I wasn't thinking of size. She's so much like a child, that one forgets how tall she is."

"Yes, she is like a child," said Hetty, thoughtfully; "perhaps it's because she's the youngest at home. All her brothers are older than she is, you know, Bertha."

"And what are they like? do they appreciate her?" inquired Bertha; "and what sort of a man is the old gentleman, her father? He's an invalid, isn't he?"

"He thinks himself so," replied Hetty, "but I can never make out what's the matter with him; and I know papa thinks it rather a farce sending him medicine. Oh, Bertha, I should hate living in that house, it is so frightfully dull; and Miss Dalton, Ada's aunt, is simply unbearable."

"What's she like? Is she one of the old maiden aunts one reads about in story-books?"

"Worse, much worse," replied Hetty; "she looks as if she had swallowed a dozen pokers at least, and her dresses never wear out, her hair never gets rough—in short, she's not like a human being at all."

"That must be unpleasant," remarked Bertha, "because those strangely-constituted beings can't very well understand the frailties of ordinary mortals. I suppose she can't comprehend why Ada's dresses should wear out, or her hair come down occasionally."

"No; that's just what it is; she makes such a fuss about every tear Ada gets, and every pair of boots she wears out; and it is so absurd, because it wouldn't signify an atom to her father if she had a new dress every week."

"He is rich, then," said Bertha. "How nice that will be for Ada when she grows up! What a deal of good she will be able to do, and I am sure she will. I'll tell her some of my castles in the air. Do you know, Hetty, sometimes I think of so many things that I should like to do for the poor children in London, if I had only got the money."

"Do you?" said Hetty. "Well, Ada will have money enough, you'd better tell her; but, Bertha, I think I shall go to bed, I feel so cold and queer."

"I should think you'd better; I'll help you," she added, as Hetty rose from the easy-chair in which she had been sitting, and walked anything

but steadily towards the door. "Dear me, how cold your hand is!"

"I'm cold one minute and hot the next," replied Hetty; "but, oh, Bertha, what's that?" she exclaimed, as she spied the shadow of the old clock stretching along the wall, and started back in alarm.

"Only the shadow of the clock, dear," Bertha replied, reassuringly; but she was alarmed at the nervous trembling of Hetty's figure, as she put her arm round her, and was very glad when she was laid quietly down in her bed.

"Do you mind staying with me, Bertha?" Hetty said, as, raising herself on her elbow, she cast anxious, fearful glances round the room; "would you read to me a little while?"

Bertha readily complied, and opening Hetty's Bible, which lay on the dressing-table, she read, in a low, soothing tone, the Saviour's parting address to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me;" and as she saw Hetty's eyes were closing, she lowered her voice till the tired girl fell asleep, calmed and quieted by those words of peace and rest.

* * * * *

"Come, isn't breakfast ready?" inquired Mr. Brewster of his wife, as he entered the room where she was busy reading letters, one morning towards

the end of February. "It is late, Harriet, and I have had a summons to No. 6."

"Oh, it is you, Edward," replied Mrs. Brewster, looking up in an absent way from the letter she held in her hand, "I did not hear you come in; but here is some bad news from Mrs. Travers. Hetty is ill, very ill, I'm afraid."

"What's the matter?" inquired the doctor, turning round hastily from the sideboard, where he was cutting himself some cold meat; "what does Mrs. Travers say?"

"Here is the letter—stop, I will read it, as you seem in such a hurry. She says: 'I am sorry to say Hetty has been very poorly, both yesterday and to-day; and this afternoon I called in our usual medical attendant, who seems to fear that she may be sickening for a fever. He tells me there is a great deal of a kind of low fever about in the village, and though at present he cannot speak positively, he feels little doubt that your daughter is suffering from the same complaint. Yesterday we hoped it was nothing but a heavy cold, but to-day she seemed worse and more feverish, so we lost no time in sending for medical advice. She is very good and patient, and I am sure I need not tell you that she shall want for nothing in the way of careful nursing; but, if you can make it convenient to come down yourself it will be a great relief to me, and,

I have no doubt, a satisfaction to yourself.' That is all about Hetty, Edward; the end is about sending the other girls away if it should prove to be fever? But what do you think?"

"That you had better go down as soon as possible; and that as some nursing and fatigue is probably in store for you, you had better eat a good breakfast. What will you have?"

"Anything, I don't care; but, Edward, what do you think about Hetty?"

"That the doctor who has seen her is probably right; there is a great deal of fever about everywhere just now; and she, you know, is always the first to take things. However, she has a good constitution, and will most likely have it lightly. Come, make haste, and eat your breakfast," he added, as he marked the lines of anxious thought on his wife's face.

Mrs. Brewster tried to swallow a few mouthfuls; but in a few minutes she started up again to find a Bradshaw, the pages of which she was still turning over in a bewildered way, when her husband having finished his breakfast came to her help.

"I must go to Mr. Dalton's now," he said. "I expect they have had intelligence from Mrs. Travers of Hetty's illness, and don't know what to do about having Ada home. Look here, this train will suit you, a quarter to eleven. I am going near the

Great Western, and will see you off. Can you be ready?"

"Oh yes; but surely, Edward, you will come too?"

"I will try and run down this evening; but you had better not wait for me; take anything you think may be useful in nursing. Hadn't you better go and give nurse all her directions now; you may be away some little time, you know."

"Yes, I will; but my head feels in a perfect whirl. I can think of nothing; but I have no time to lose."

"No; but don't put yourself into a fluster, or you'll be good for nothing when you get there;" and with these words the doctor left the room.

When he returned, it was with a shade of annoyance on his face; but busied with her preparations, his wife took no note of it till she was seated by his side in the brougham driving rapidly towards the railway station, at leisure to think and talk.

Naturally ascribing the grave look to anxiety for his daughter, the anxious mother inquired, eagerly, "Whether he thought she should find her very ill," pleading earnestly that Mrs. Travers made no mention of there being any danger.

"Certainly not," he replied at once; "from what we have heard, I see no reason to be greatly alarmed about Hetty; but, my dear, I wasn't thinking about that then. You know I have just been to Mr. Dalton's."

"Yes; what's the matter, is he pretending to be ill again, just to keep you from going down to Hetty?"

"No, my dear," replied the doctor, laughing, "he is not quite so bad as you think him; but I confess he made me very angry this morning. As I imagined, Miss Dalton had had a letter from Mrs. Travers, telling her of Hetty's illness, and inquiring whether, in case the doctor decidedly pronounced it fever, she should send Ada home at once. This was the point I was sent for to decide; but as they don't seem disposed to follow my advice, I don't see why they sent for me."

"What did you say, Edward; surely you advised them to have Ada home at once?"

"Of course; but the word fever has frightened the old man out of his wits, and he declares he cannot have her in the house; they talk of Miss Dalton's going down to the sea, and having Ada with her; but Miss Dalton says she can't go to-day, nor to-morrow, so that in all probability Ada will be taken ill before they have made up their minds."

"Selfish old fellow," exclaimed Mrs. Brewster, "if it wasn't for the children, I'd send her up to our house, Edward, directly I get down."

"Yes, if it wasn't for the children," said Mr. Brewster, "but with them, I suppose it won't do."

I shall go in again to Mr. Dalton before I come down to-night, and if I can get leave, I'll bring her up with me."

"Yes, do," replied his wife; "and oh, Edward, do come as early as you can."

"To be sure, but don't expect me before eight," was the answer as the doctor assisted his wife to alight, and went to get her ticket. "Here, this carriage will do; of course you'll telegraph if anything unforeseen occurs. Good-bye; I mustn't wait," and Mr. Brewster returned to his carriage and the labours of the day.

Strange confusion prevailed in the orderly household when Mrs. Brewster reached The Croft. A fly was waiting at the door and three of the girls were waiting in the hall on the point of departure, while several of the others were standing round, watching to see them off. Miss Travers too was there, and at the sight of Mrs. Brewster she came forward to welcome her with a smile, though her face a moment before had looked grave and anxious.

"Hetty is much the same," she answered to Mrs. Brewster's eager inquiry; "she slept a little last night, but she is very restless now. You will come into the drawing-room and rest before you go up to her. May I ask whether you have brought us any news of Mr. Dalton's wishes concerning Ada; my mother thought that as they live near you, you

might have heard whether they wish her to go home. I should like her to go by this train."

Mrs. Brewster explained that as yet Mr. Dalton had not decided what to do with his daughter, and so for the present she must remain where she was, adding that she hoped Mr. Brewster might bring further directions when he came in the evening.

"Mr. Brewster is coming then, I am so glad," said Miss Travers. "Seeing you by yourself made me fear he could not come. Perhaps you will like to come into my mother's room and take off your bonnet before you go to Hetty's room," she added.

"Thank you," Mrs. Brewster replied, and in a very few minutes she was by the side of Hetty's bed. The latter was dozing, or scarcely conscious, for she took no notice of her mother nor gave any sign of perceiving the change when Mrs. Travers gently resigned her place by Hetty's pillow to Mrs. Brewster, whose entrance she had greeted with a sad smile and a warm pressure of the hand.

Mrs. Travers had much to occupy her thoughts and attention that day, for the two governesses and all the pupils, except little Carrie who had no home in England but the school, and Ada Dalton, were to leave at once. With the exception of occasional visits, therefore, she was obliged to absent herself from the sick-room for some time; but towards evening, all her other duties being ended, she re-

turned to her post to beg Mrs. Brewster to refresh herself for a short time by a turn in the garden.

"I have nothing at all to do now, so do let me beg you to leave Hetty to me for a little while," she said; "you know you have had a railway journey to-day, and it will be a rest to me to sit still."

But Mrs. Brewster could not be persuaded. "I am getting very uneasy about her," she whispered to Mrs. Travers, "she was quite quiet most part of the afternoon, but the last half hour she seems different; she looks so strangely at me, I can't be sure whether she knows me or not. Will the doctor be here again to-day?"

"Oh, yes; he said he should call this evening," Mrs. Travers replied, drawing closer to the bed to observe Hetty more narrowly. The large blue eyes gazed at her, but more as if they were fixed on a stranger than with any token of recognition. "I am afraid it is so," Mrs. Travers added, leaving the bed-side and speaking in an under tone, "but you must not be alarmed, dear Mrs. Brewster. Mr. Long said this morning that it was probable she would be light-headed, but he did not say it was a bad sign."

"I hope he will be here soon," replied Mrs. Brewster. "I do not like her looks at all, and I do so dread delirium; do tell me how it first came on with her, Mrs. Travers."

"Let us go into the next room then," said Mrs. Travers. "Kate will stay with her," Miss Travers had just entered the room; "call if you want anything, my dear."

Miss Travers sat down by Hetty's bed, and as the door closed on the two ladies, the invalid turned her large eyes on Miss Travers questioningly.

"What is it, my dear?" inquired Miss Travers, "do you want anything?"

"Mamma," said Hetty plaintively; "I thought mamma was here just now."

"So she was, dear, and she will be back again directly. She has only left the room for a few minutes. Are you comfortable?"

Hetty moved her head about restlessly and made no answer, then she said eagerly, "Where am I, is it time to get up? all the other girls are gone down."

"Yes, dear, but you are not well enough to get up, you must be still and try to go to sleep."

"Go to sleep, oh, I can't—where's Ada? Ada will read to me;" and Hetty sat up in bed and gazed wildly about her.

"Hush, dear! lie down, and try to go to sleep; see it is quite dark, you must not get up yet."

"I must, I must, it is my turn to practise before breakfast," and she tried to get out of bed.

"No, no, dear, lie still, and I will call your

mamma to sit with you," said Miss Travers, persuasively.

"Mamma," said Hetty, inquiringly, "where is she?" then, starting up in bed again, she called in a shrill unnatural voice, "Mamma, mamma," so loud that Mrs. Brewster and Mrs. Travers came hurriedly in to see what was the matter.

"She knows me now," said the former, joyfully; but no, Hetty had sunk down again on to her pillow, and her eyes were closed in a state of half unconsciousness.

Thus the long hours wore away, till about nine o'clock the well-known sound of her husband's step on the stairs sent a thrill of gladness through Mrs. Brewster's heart. To her at least Mr. Brewster was the first doctor in the world, and she watched eagerly to see what he thought of their darling.

"Not worse than I expected," was his verdict when he had carefully examined the patient; "that is nothing strange," he replied to his wife as she said Hetty had scarcely known any one all the evening. "I should have been more surprised if it had not been the case. But now, Harriet, I am not going back till the seven o'clock train to-morrow morning, so I can undertake to-night. If Mrs. Travers will kindly let you sleep in one of those delightful little beds in Hetty's room, I will call you if I want you."

"Oh, no, Edward, I must sit up to-night; I could not sleep, I am positive; I had quite determined to sit up."

"You will have plenty of night-work yet, Harriet; and as I can be here to-night, it is absurd of you to waste your strength; come, go to bed like a sensible being."

Very unwillingly Mrs. Brewster complied, and though she started up at the slightest sound, and lay for some time watching Hetty's restless tossing to and fro, towards morning she fell into a sound sleep, from which the doctor was most unwilling to wake her before his departure. Still he was compelled to do so, for he wished to leave some directions, and he was also anxious to see Ada before he left.

"I could do nothing with Mr. Dalton yesterday. He says, if possible, his sister will go down to Brighton to-morrow, and if so they will telegraph to Ada to join her, but he wished me to see Ada before I came up this morning. Will you go and see if she is awake?"

Mrs. Brewster complied, and the doctor shortly after left, promising to return for an hour, if possible that evening.

"Ada seems all right now," he said to his wife at parting, "and you must not be down-hearted about Hetty. You know she always does have everything

pretty sharply, but, with God's blessing, I trust she will pull through."

"It is easy to say don't be down-hearted," murmured Mrs. Brewster to herself more than once that day, during which scarcely a moment of full consciousness came to cheer the long hours of watching; but if she could only talk to me, she could tell me how she felt, and I should know how much to hope. I seem to be doing everything in the dark. Oh, if she were only at home, how much less trying it would be; her father could see her constantly. That Mr. Long is all very well, but——" and here Mrs. Brewster reproached herself for repining and forgetting the mercy which had saved her other children from the risk of infection, and she began to fear lest she might have seemed ungrateful to Mrs. Travers and her daughter for their unfailing kindness and sympathy.

The long hours passed away, varied only by two visits from Mr. Long, and by a short walk which Mrs. Travers induced the anxious mother to take in the garden. The evening came again. Hetty was growing more restless and delirious, when Mrs. Travers came into the sick-room with a face that boded no good tidings. "Poor little Ada," she said, "I fear she is sickening too."

Mrs. Brewster's face grew white and distressed.

"Oh, why, are you sure? perhaps the child is nervous, and fancying she is ill."

Mrs. Travers shook her head. "I fear not," she said. Kate found her in the school-room half an hour ago, sitting with her head on her hand, and when she asked her what was the matter, the poor child said her head ached, and her legs ached, and she ached all over. I'm afraid it's the same thing, but I told her it might be only a cold. I have sent her to bed, and given her a warm draught to drink. You expect Mr. Brewster again to-night, do you not?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Brewster, sorrowfully. "Oh, Mrs. Travers, this is a sore trial for you, for all of us. It is hard to say, Thy will be done. Will you stay here one moment, and let me go and see Ada? Poor child, she has no mother to come to her like my Hetty."

CHAPTER XIII.

NO FEAR.

Leaning on Thee no fear alarms,
Calmly I stand on death's dark brink,
I feel the everlasting arms,
I cannot sink.

MISS DALTON had just risen from her solitary breakfast one morning about ten days after the events recorded in our last chapter, when the sudden stopping of a hansom cab in front of the house, and the loud knock which succeeded it, startled her from her usual composure. Mr. Dalton always took his breakfast in bed, and the three sons, who with Ada, formed the rest of the family, generally found the house in — Square so dull, that they were seldom at home. Miss Dalton therefore led a very quiet and regular life, and this sudden knock at such an early hour, as we have said, greatly discomposed her.

“Mr. Brewster, I suppose,” she muttered to herself, “no one else would take such a liberty. Show him into the drawing-room, Joseph,” she

added aloud, as the footman opened the dining-room door ; but she was too late, the doctor had followed close upon the man's footsteps, and was already in the room.

"Excuse me, Miss Dalton," he said, "I am greatly pressed for time—in fact, don't know which way to turn ; but I have just come from Mrs. Travers, and thought you would be glad to hear my report."

"Thank you. Will you sit down ; you will excuse the breakfast things. I believe I am rather late this morning ; do take a chair."

"No, thanks," and the doctor remained leaning against the mantelpiece, while he continued, "You must be anxious to know about Ada, Miss Dalton, it must be trying to be away from her just now."

"Yes, but I trust she's doing well. You sent a good nurse, I think ; and with your going backwards and forwards, my brother and I are confident that she has every attention."

"I believe she has," replied Mr. Brewster, slowly ; "Mr. Long is most worthy of confidence, and Mrs. and Miss Travers are wearing themselves out in the anxiety to do all that is in their power ; but, Miss Dalton, all human care and skill does sometimes prove unavailing ; and I am sorry to say that this morning I can give you no good news."

"You mean you think her worse. Oh ! I am not

surprised at that; I thought she very likely would be worse before she is better; fevers must take their course, you know."

"Of course; but, Miss Dalton, excuse me if I speak hastily. I must own I'm more than anxious about Ada; and I came to you this morning thus early, because I felt sure that when you knew how ill she was, you would wish to lose no time in going to her."

Miss Dalton looked perfectly amazed. "Go to her, Mr. Brewster! Why, what can be the use in my going to her; you say she has every care, and even if she had not, I am nothing of a nurse. Really, I should be of no use; and I assure you it would be extremely inconvenient. Besides, you forget my brother, I could not possibly leave him."

"Oh yes, you can, perfectly well; you can telegraph to Frank to come to his father immediately. You know where he is, don't you? and as to your not being a nurse, that is no consequence at all. Ada is perfectly well nursed."

"Then what is the use in my going. I assure you, my brother and I have perfect confidence in Mrs. Travers."

"Possibly there may be no positive necessity for your going, Miss Dalton," replied the doctor, almost impatiently; "but would you yourself like to be left when you are dying to the care of those, who,

though they may be quite as kind as your relatives, are yet only the friends of barely a year's acquaintance?"

"Dying!" said Miss Dalton, slowly, "did you say dying, Mr. Brewster? surely you do not mean that Ada is dying!"

"Well, not actually," said the doctor; "but if you wish to know the truth, Miss Dalton, with every hope that I may be mistaken, I must say I do not think she can recover; she seems to me fast sinking."

Miss Dalton sat perfectly still and perfectly erect in the chair which she had taken on the doctor's entrance, gazing at him as if trying to realize what he meant. Death, that terrible spectre which for long years had been the constant terror of the household, from which they had tried to secure themselves by every device in their power, seemed now to be drawing near in all his fearful reality. She shuddered. "Dying!" she repeated; "dying! dying!" and then the stiff inflexible-looking figure bent, and Miss Dalton hid her white frightened face in her hands.

It had often been Mr. Brewster's lot to speak those saddest of all words, "there is no hope," and to witness the burst of grief, or the quiet uncomplaining anguish that those words produce; but never in his life before had he seen the sorrowful

tidings received with such a look of terror, or felt so much at a loss what to say next.

At last Miss Dalton looked up. "Mr. Brewster," she said, "I cannot go to her, I cannot see her die."

"My dear Miss Dalton," said the doctor, reassuringly, "I assure you you need not fear it. There is nothing terrible in Ada's illness; even her wanderings—and she does not wander much—are quiet compared with poor Hetty's. Do let me persuade you to go to the poor child."

Miss Dalton hesitated. "Will to-morrow do?" she said at last, "I feel so upset to-day."

"Suppose you rest now, and let me escort you down this afternoon. I am going now to try and get a friend to see my patients for two or three days, and if I succeed, I intend to stay at The Croft till—well—till we know what will be the end of it all. Will you meet me at the Great Western Station at a quarter past five?"

Miss Dalton agreed with a look of great alarm; but the doctor took no notice, only saying, "Then if you will tell Mr. Dalton something of what I have told you, I will see about the telegram to Frank;" and the next minute he was gone.

"Poor thing, I'm afraid I startled her," he said to himself. "I might have said it more gently. I wonder whether her courage will last till the even-

ing. I shan't be surprised if she doesn't meet me, after all, she looked so scared. Poor little Ada! how different she looked when Miss Travers spoke of death; it is not such a frightful thing to her."

Notwithstanding his misgivings, Miss Dalton's courage did not fail her before the evening. Hers was the first face he saw when springing from his carriage at the railway station the doctor hastened to the lady's waiting-room in search of her; but it was still a pale and frightened face, and more than once as the train rapidly approached their destination did Mr. Brewster ask himself whether he had done wisely in urging her to come, whether she would not be rather a trouble than a comfort to her niece.

Something of this fear he communicated to Miss Travers when for a moment he was left alone with her; but she did not seem to share it, though greatly grieved at the distress of her guest. "She will forget all about it when she sees Ada," she said; "she has been quite quiet to-day. I hoped she was better, but Mr. Long shakes his head," and the tears filled Kate Travers' eyes as she spoke. Few knew the strong tie that bound Ada and Kate Travers together, nor could tell how much of grief at parting was mingled with the joy that the young teacher felt that, having been the blessed means of leading her pupil to choose the better part, she

should be privileged to see her enter into the full enjoyment of that eternal life which had already begun for her below.

"Is she conscious, will she know me?" inquired poor Miss Dalton, as she followed Mrs. Travers to Ada's room. "Oh! what shall I say to her? how dreadful it must be to die, and so young too!"

Mrs. Travers stopped with her hand on the handle of the door, and looked kindly at her visitor. "She may be asleep, Miss Dalton, we must be very quiet; sleep is so good for her, you know; but don't be alarmed, she does not seem to suffer much."

The stillness of the room awed Miss Dalton into silence. Mr. Brewster had gone at once to see Ada on arriving, and with the nurse was now standing beside the bed. He turned round as Miss Dalton approached, and made way for her to look at her niece. Ada lay with her eyes closed; her long, bright, fair hair combed back from her face, which was perfectly colourless, while her lips looked parched and dry. The room was so much darkened that at first her aunt could scarcely see her distinctly, but after a minute she drew back, saying, "Is she asleep? oh! she looks fearfully changed; I should not have known her."

"Sit down here," said Mr. Brewster, drawing an arm-chair to the head of the bed; "by and by, I dare say she will know you, now she is uncon-

scious ; but you must rest and not excite yourself. Nurse, you will take care of Miss Dalton, I am going to look at my daughter."

Mrs. Travers accompanied him, and Miss Dalton was left alone with her sick niece and the nurse, who was sitting on the other side of the bed ; but very soon the door opened noiselessly, and Miss Travers joined the silent group. She looked utterly worn out, and the nurse seeing her come in pointed to a sofa in the corner of the room, and made signs of entreaty that she would rest. But the young lady shook her head, and drawing a footstool to the foot of the bed, she sat down and rested her head on her hand, leaning against the bed, with her eyes constantly fixed on the unconscious invalid.

Thus more than an hour passed away, during which time the nurse tried in vain to pour medicine or food down Ada's throat ; but no one spoke, and Miss Dalton's nervousness increased every minute, till she felt as if she could hardly bear it. What an intense relief it was when the doctor came in, and, after a glance at her, said, in a low tone, " Mrs. Travers is with Hetty, and I have sent my wife down for a turn in the garden ; will you not go with her, she wants to see you."

She almost rushed from the room, and meeting Mrs. Brewster in the passage, all her stiff ceremonious manner vanished as she threw herself into

her friend's arms, in an almost hysterical burst of crying. "It is so dreadful," she answered, "she lies there taking no notice, and they are all as still as death. Oh, Mrs. Brewster, must I stay, what can I do?"

"Would you rather go?" inquired Mrs. Brewster, surprised; she could imagine no greater sorrow than it would be to be separated from Hetty just now, and she forgot for a moment that Miss Dalton had not a mother's feelings.

"Oh, I don't know, what can I do here? I am of no use, and it is all so miserable."

"But if Ada recovers consciousness, and my husband thinks she will, it may be a comfort to her to have you with her."

Miss Dalton felt doubtful; she knew she had never tried to win Ada's love, or sought to act a mother's part towards her: but she did not like to say so; she only returned to her first complaint, "It is so dreadful, death is so dreadful. Does Mr. Brewster say she is sure to die?"

"Nothing is impossible with God, you know, dear Miss Dalton," replied Mrs. Brewster, soothingly; "He can raise Ada up again; but if not, is it not a great comfort that she can meet death without fear?"

"Without fear, can she? it seems to me so dreadful to think of seeing her die. I have always dreaded death so much, Mrs. Brewster."

They had reached the garden by this time, the evening was fine and starlight ; and as Mrs. Brewster turned and looked towards the window of the room where Ada lay, she smiled and said, " Yet, it is a glorious thought, that she will soon have left that dark, dreary sick-room for a home of glory and the immediate presence of God; is it not, Miss Dalton ?"

" I don't know, I don't understand these things," replied Miss Dalton ; " but does the child know she is dying ? I cannot bear to say the word, and I can't think who could have told her."

" No one told her, she seemed to think from the first she should not recover ; and when we talked of what she would do when she was well again, she always shook her head."

" But I thought she was delirious ; perhaps she did not understand what you were saying ?"

" Oh, she has been nothing like so delirious as Hetty. Sometimes for hours she has been quite herself ; she was this morning and a good part of last night, and my husband has no doubt she will be again."

" And does she say she is not afraid to die. I cannot understand it," replied Miss Dalton.

" Miss Travers asked her if she wished to get well this morning," answered Mrs. Brewster, " and dear Ada said so sweetly that Jesus knew what was best for her, she should like very much to be

with Him, but she had always hoped she should be able to do one little thing to show her love to Him before she died. I could not help thinking of the words, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'"

"I cannot understand it," repeated Miss Dalton; "I always thought that everybody was afraid, and Ada certainly was never very courageous."

"No, it is only faith in her Saviour that gives her courage now," said Mrs. Brewster. "Death has no sting, for the Saviour has died. Miss Dalton, I think I must go in now. I cannot bear to leave my child many minutes."

"Oh, Mrs. Brewster, I really do not think I can go back to *that* room, my nerves will not stand it; really, do you think I ought? you know I am of no use there."

"Worse than no use," thought Mrs. Brewster, but she did not say so. "I think," she replied, aloud, "that there is a little bed in the dressing-room that opens into Ada's room—suppose you lie down there and try to get some sleep; I will ask my husband to call you if there is any change, and you must be tired after your journey and the excitement you have gone through."

Slowly the two tired ladies ascended the long staircase, and as they reached the top the sound of a voice—now moaning, now almost screaming—made Miss Dalton stand still in perfect terror. "Is that

Ada?" she said; "oh, no, I cannot go into that room again, it is impossible."

"That is my poor Hetty," replied Mrs. Brewster, calmly but mournfully; "she has scarcely ceased that cry for five days, Miss Dalton; but, thank God, she is not so prostrate as Ada."

"Hetty," exclaimed Miss Dalton; "oh! Mrs. Brewster, I had forgotten her; is she dying too?"

The mother's lips quivered, and she clutched the bannisters as if the sudden question had been more than she could bear. "I pray God, no," she gasped, "I could not bear it; oh, I could not."

Miss Dalton looked surprised, but she asked no more questions, and Mrs. Brewster recovering herself, moved on to the top of the stairs, where her husband was standing in earnest conversation with Mr. Long.

"I have been telling Miss Dalton, Edward," she said, addressing her husband, "that she had better lie down to rest on the little bed in the dressing-room, and that she may rely on you to call her if there is any change."

"Certainly," said Mr. Brewster; "but the poor child is awake and conscious now; Miss Dalton will like to see her," and he opened the door for her to enter.

"Wait one minute," answered Miss Dalton, drawing back. "Mr. Brewster, will you tell me how


long it will be ? I mean, you know I know nothing about such things, will it be very soon ?”

The doctor was silent. “We cannot say for certain,” interposed Mr. Long ; “the mischief about the lungs is making rapid progress; but, my dear madam, while there is life there is hope. Will you not go and see her now ?”

He again pushed the door open, and Miss Dalton entered. The scene was changed since she had left the room—the nurse had gone downstairs to get her supper, and Miss Travers was sitting alone by Ada’s bed. The young girl’s face too was changed. Miss Dalton thought that even in the few minutes of her absence it had grown paler and thinner; but the blue eyes were unclosed now, and as they rested on her aunt, Ada feebly tried to smile as she put out her hand to greet her.

“It is so kind,” she murmured, “to take so much trouble;” the words came with difficulty amid gasps for breath, and Miss Dalton stooping over her felt the feeble frame quivering with the effort she was making.

Miss Travers interposed, “You must lie still, dear Ada,” she said, “and your aunt will sit here where you can see her,” at the same time rising to resign her chair to Miss Dalton; “and now, you must try and swallow this,” holding a spoonful of stimulant to her lips.



Ada submitted, though with evident reluctance, and her aunt watched her, thinking how terrible it must be to be in such a state of weakness. Suddenly the sick girl turned her head, and saw at a glance the distress on Miss Dalton's face.

"What is it?" she whispered, anxiously, turning her large eyes questioningly from Miss Dalton to Miss Travers, and back again to Miss Dalton, "what is it?"

"I cannot help it," broke from poor Miss Dalton. "Oh, Ada! is it not awful to die; are you not frightened, poor child?"

"To die!" gasped Ada, a shadow passing over her pale face, before so calm and peaceful. "Am I dying; oh, yes, I know; but——" and she struggled to speak distinctly, "Jesus will take care of me, Aunt Jane."

The cloud had vanished almost as soon as come, and when Miss Travers bent over her, saying, "'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,'" the pale, trembling lips, tried to add, "I will fear no evil," but the power to speak was almost gone.

To hear that short, gasping breath was terrible; often as Miss Dalton lay on the little bed in the next room, she held her breath to listen to that sound. Tired as she was, sleep refused to come to her relief; once or twice she thought of returning to the sick-room, but an indescribable fear kept her back—there was

something terrible to her in the perfect stillness that prevailed, broken only by Miss Travers' voice repeating Scripture words of comfort and strengthening, the nurse's entreaties to Ada to swallow food, or, now and then, the doctor's voice, in such gentle tones as Miss Dalton had never before heard him use.

Once or twice Ada spoke, but her voice, now little more than a whisper, did not reach Miss Dalton's ear. Thus the long hours wore away, and as the day began to dawn, she fell into an uneasy slumber. It had lasted rather more than an hour, when a hand was laid on her shoulder, and the nurse's voice said, "The doctor bid me wake you, ma'am; he thought you would like to see Miss Ada now." She had gone without waiting for a reply, and slowly, and as if still in a dream, Miss Dalton roused herself and followed.

Then, for the first time in her life, she looked on death: she knew it, and trembled. Ada was surely now passing down into that dark valley, whither no mortal friend can follow or accompany, passing slowly but surely beyond the reach of human care.

The sun was fully up now, and its soft beams lighted up the room, and enabled Miss Dalton to distinguish more plainly than she had yet done the features of her niece, and of the three watchers around the bed. Ada seemed insensible; but when suddenly through the quiet air there came the sweet

sound of the village church bell, she opened her eyes, saying softly, "Sunday; going home on Sunday," and then the heavy eyelids closed again, and for a short time she seemed to doze. How long that sleep lasted no one noticed. Quietly they watched her, half thinking that from that sleep she would pass into her Father's presence; but once more there was a start, and the large dim eyes opened wide as they gazed intently on the ceiling above, the lips murmured, "Jesus, my Saviour!" there were a few deep sighs, then a deep, intense silence that told those around that the ransomed spirit had fled away, and was at rest.

It is not death to die,
To leave this weary road;
And 'mid the brotherhood on high
To be at home with God.

It is not death to bear
The wrench that sets us free
From dungeon chains, to breathe the air
Of glorious liberty.

From the quiet room whence Ada's spirit had departed, Kate Travers went to her own chamber. She thought she would return thanks for her who had just departed this life in God's faith and fear. But in vain she tried; the words would not come; the tears she had checked for days would have their free course; and instead of thanksgiving, the language of her heart was, "Oh God, that Thou wouldst take me, too."

The glimpse of perfect rest, which, during those long hours of watching, she had seemed to catch from within the veil, made her spirit turn with dread and trembling from the prospect of resuming life's daily toil and strife. She looked back on the many years she had already passed in the conflict with sin, in the struggle to do and suffer God's holy will, on the daily anxiety, the daily labour, and for a while the longing for the rest into which Ada had entered, entirely possessed her.

Thus more than an hour passed away, during which, Mrs. Travers thinking her daughter was resting after her long period of nursing, forbore to enter her room lest she should disturb her. But at last Kate roused herself; "I must go and see how Hetty is," she said to herself, and drying her tear-stained eyes, and smoothing her disordered hair, she once more left her room. Instinctively her hand rested on the handle of the now quiet and deserted room, and scarcely knowing why, she turned it and entered once more. How long she stayed gazing on that quiet face, she had no idea; but when she once more left the room, it was with a lightened heart and happier countenance; for in the content that reigned in that quiet sleeper's face, she had read a lesson of submission to God's holy will, and could say in Ada's own words, "Jesus knows what is best for me."

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME AGAIN.

Art tired ?

There is a rest remaining. Hast thou sinned ?

There is a sacrifice. Lift up thy head

The lovely world, and the over world alike

Ring with a song eterne, a happy rede,

"Thy Father loves thee."

J. INGELOW.

THE old house was deserted. The Croft was given up to the tender mercies of painters and whitewashers, and all the merry party which, a few weeks before, had made the rooms resound with life and bustle, were scattered to their different homes. Mrs. and Miss Travers, too, with little Carrie, had gone to the sea-side for a fortnight, both needing rest and change.

But what of Hetty? To find her we must return to the house in London, and there stretched on the sofa in the cheery drawing-room, supported by numerous cushions, lies Hetty ; but Hetty without her roses, and without her blithe, joyous smile.

By her side, on the floor, sits her sister Gracie, a fair-haired, rosy child of nine, a second edition of

her mother, Mr. Brewster often calls her. A very pleasant thing to look upon is Gracie Brewster, especially as the little maiden has no idea whatever that her face is anything out of the common, and is, therefore, never on the look out for compliments. She is specially happy just now, and the reason of her contentment she communicates to her sister, as they sit awaiting their mother's arrival from the dining-room.

"Do you know, Hetty, I feel quite grown up to-night; it is so grand to be told to take care of you, just as if I was a grown-up woman."

"I don't need much taking care of now," replied Hetty, coldly. "I believe I'm quite capable of taking care of myself; only mamma is nervous."

"Oh! but think, Hetty, how dreadfully ill you've been; why, once papa wasn't at all sure whether you would ever get well again. He told me so, his own self."

"Did he, what did he say?" said Hetty, roused to greater interest by this discovery.

"He said a good deal," replied Gracie, quite proud of the confidence her father had reposed in her; "it was the day after poor Ada died when he was telling us about it. He said you were very weak, and unless God was very good to us, perhaps we should lose our sister too. You can't think how Freddy cried, Hetty."

Hetty was silent, and Gracie continued, mysteriously, "I can tell you something else, if you like, Hetty."

"What?" inquired Hetty; "tell me anything you like, Gracie; it tires me to talk, but I can listen."

Gracie looked gratified, and continued, "Did you ever see papa cry, Hetty?"

"Papa, no!" exclaimed Hetty. "I don't believe he ever did such a thing; why?"

"Because," said Gracie, lowering her voice till Hetty could scarcely hear, "because when we were all so unhappy—I mean about dear Ada and about you, Hetty—I looked at papa, and I'm sure there were tears in his eyes. Freddy says it is all nonsense, he is sure there weren't; but I know there were, and I heard nurse tell Susan that she had never seen master so upset, so I'm sure I'm right. Don't you think I am, Hetty?"

"Very likely you may be; papa was very fond of Ada, I know," replied Hetty, sadly.

"That's just what I told Freddy," replied Gracie; "but he said nonsense, Ada was nothing to papa; and if papa was unhappy, it was about you and not Ada."

Hetty was silent, she liked to hear these scraps of news concerning the time when she lay unconscious; but she shrank from asking questions, and Gracie was afraid she might say too much, and so

awake in her sister painful remembrances. It was a sad recovery to Hetty, strength seemed to come back so slowly, and totally unused to the sensation of weakness and languor, she often doubted whether she was really getting well at all. Then, with every thought of the past, came the sorrowful remembrance that she had parted for ever in this world with the friend of her childhood—that Ada had gone, passed away from her sight without a word of farewell while she lay unconscious of the sorrow that was awaiting her. It seemed to Hetty as if, with Ada's death, she had entered on a new stage of her existence, the past seemed so very distant, her childhood seemed to have fled so very far away. When she looked back on the time when she began her school-life, she could scarcely believe it was only a year ago, so much had happened since then, and she felt so different, so much more than a year older.

She was following this melancholy train of thought when Gracie, who had been keeping quiet because she fancied that Hetty was going to sleep, suddenly exclaimed, "There's mamma coming upstairs! Oh! I'm so sorry, I shall have to go to bed now."

"Well, Gracie, have you been a good nurse?" inquired Mrs. Brewster, as she entered the room; "I have come to relieve you from your watch. It is bedtime now, my child."

"Yes, mamma; I am very sorry. I like taking care of Hetty," replied the little girl, as she raised her face to be kissed; "may I stay with her to-morrow evening too?"

"We will see. Good-night, darling;" and the child went off, singing a soft lullaby to her doll, while Mrs. Brewster drew a low chair near Hetty's sofa, and sat down beside her, saying, "I shall have to send my big baby to bed soon; I think she looks very tired to-night."

"Yes, mamma, I am very tired, but I would rather not go to bed yet. I could not get to sleep for such a long time last night. I can't think why I don't get stronger."

"You must have patience, dear. I often think the getting well is the worst part of being ill; weakness is sometimes even harder to bear than real pain, and I think it often makes one much more irritable."

"Do you, mamma? Then, perhaps, that is why I have been so cross the last day or two. I felt as if I could hardly speak civilly to anybody."

Mrs. Brewster smiled.

"You saw it, mamma, didn't you? I wonder you didn't scold me; and papa, I have been quite afraid to see him since I answered him so rudely about the wine at dinner-time."

"Then you had better hide your face in your

cushion, for here he is," replied Mrs. Brewster, as her husband entered the room. "Papa, Hetty says she is quite afraid to see you."

"Why?" inquired Mr. Brewster, looking surprised. "Oh, I suspect she has been longing for that extra half glass of wine, and is at last compelled to own it."

"No, indeed, papa," said Hetty, laughing; "I haven't wanted it at all."

"Then you are afraid I shall order you off to bed."

"I can't go, if you do, papa, for I don't believe my legs will carry me, they do ache so."

"Fortunately they are not the only pair of legs in the house; but was that the reason of your alarm? Have I guessed right?"

"No, not at all; you are quite out, papa."

"Hetty is afraid," explained Mrs. Brewster, "that you have a lecture in store for her about her ill-temper. She is aware she has been rather cantankerous of late."

"Is that it, Hetty?" inquired her father, gently.

"Yes, papa. I know I was very rude to you to-day about that wine, and I thought you were angry with me," said Hetty, humbly.

"I told Hetty that we knew that weakness makes people cross," interposed Mrs. Brewster, anxious to shield her darling from blame, which she

feared might be too much for her. "She could not really help it."

"But we know, too," replied her husband, "that when they are ill people get rather spoilt, and behave as if they were to be consulted in everything, and are inclined to fancy they may say anything they choose, because nobody will like to find fault with them. Don't you think so, Hetty?"

"Yes, papa," said Hetty, half laughing and half crying. "I wasn't in the least afraid mamma would scold me, but I thought you would."

"You think I am used to torturing people, and rather enjoy it than otherwise," replied Mr. Brewster, smiling; "but, seriously, Hetty, though your weakness may be the cause of your feeling cross and ill-tempered, that is no reason why you should give way to it. If we want excuses for being disagreeable, we can generally find them. For instance, mamma, who is very much worn out just now, by the long bout of nursing she has had, might very well say, 'I can't help being cross, because I feel so tired;' and, on the same principle, I might think I had a perfect right to be irritable whenever I have had a harder day's work than usual."

"Of course," said Hetty, "there's no real excuse for me; it was so nice to think I couldn't help it."

"Delightful, indeed, I have no doubt; but, come, as we have settled that matter, and agreed that the next time I say you are to have some wine, you will not tell me, even if you think so, that I know nothing about the matter—suppose you go to bed."

"Yes, Hetty, do, and I will come to help your undress," said Mrs. Brewster.

"No, mamma, Susan or nurse will help me, I daresay. You are tired; you must not come upstairs this evening," replied Hetty, as she rose languidly from the sofa, and drew a shawl around her.

"Well done, Hetty; and how about getting upstairs?" said her father, as she approached him to bid him good-night. "Ah, I see you are giddy; well, we must try and fancy you are a baby again. I verily believe you like being carried, you lazy child."

There was a tenderness in the doctor's kiss that night which banished any half-formed idea that Hetty might have had that he was harsh in saying she could conquer her irritability if she tried. He was right, she told herself: and even in the dark, and alone, Hetty blushed to think of the many rude and thoughtless things that, in the weeks she had been at home, she had said to her mother.

"Mamma must almost have wished I had not got well, to be such a trouble to her," she said to herself; "and yet how glad she seems, and papa,

too." And, from thinking of these things, her thoughts turned involuntarily to that other, that more than mother's love, which, since her illness, had begun to be precious to her.

"Have you heard from Mrs. Travers? When do they begin work again?" inquired Mr. Brewster of his wife one day, when Hetty had been some time at home, and begun in some measure to resume her usual habits. Easter was now passed, and May was fast approaching. "Surely they cannot fear infection now."

"No; I heard from Mrs. Travers yesterday, and she says they hope to meet again next Saturday. A sad meeting, she says, it will be, for they will all miss dear Ada. She will be glad when they are regularly at work again. She inquired after Miss Dalton. Have you seen her lately, Edward?"

"No, they are still at Westhayes. I met Frank a day or two ago, and he asked me to go down and see his father the first day I could spare time; but he says Mr. Dalton is better than he has been for a long time. Westhayes is, it seems, not far from the Bensons' place, and the Daltons have struck up an intimacy with the family. I should never have fancied they were likely to get on together."

"The Daltons and the Bensons—no, I should think not. Only think of Miss Dalton and Flo-

rence Benson together. How amused Hetty will be."

"Frank said they were lively people, and amused his father," continued the doctor; "but he didn't seem to admire them much himself. In fact, he looked very much as if he had serious reasons for disapproving of the acquaintance."

"What sort of reasons? because they are worldly people, I suppose you mean. Well, I think Frank should try and make himself more agreeable to his father, if he wants to commend religion to him. He is the best of the Daltons, of course; but I have no patience with his melancholy ways. How different Ada would have been—bright, smiling little Ada."

"She would have done Frank good," replied Mr. Brewster; "but I think you malign him. He is a very good fellow in his way, only rather peculiar."

"I have a great dislike to peculiar people," said Mrs. Brewster, warmly. "Edward, you did not see him when we were at the Daltons', and I was cheering the old man up by telling some ridiculous stories of my young days. I never saw such a face—wonder, contempt, and pity all blended. I suppose he wondered that anybody calling herself a Christian could talk such nonsense."

Mr. Brewster smiled. "He has an unfortunate aversion to ladies, I believe," he said, "which is

hardly to be wondered at, considering that he has spent most part of his life with his aunt. But he certainly is peculiar."

"Conceited, you mean; peculiar people are always conceited, and that's what makes them so disagreeable," replied Mrs. Brewster.

"Rather a sweeping assertion; but to leave the Daltons, and return to Mrs. Travers. Did she say nothing about Hetty?"

"Yes, she asked how she was, hoped she was better, and so forth."

"May I ask what so forth means?"

"Well, she wanted to know whether we thought of her returning to school soon."

"I thought so; and you don't want her to go?"

"Of course not yet, she is not nearly strong enough; but, Edward, I do so wish school-time was over for her, and she could stay at home. Do not you?"

"No, I cannot say I do. I am more hopeful about Hetty than I have been for a long time, and I look forward to school doing her a great deal of good in the next six months."

"Well, then, I suppose she must go back. I was in hopes you would change your mind, and keep her at home; but, at any rate, you will not think of her returning for some weeks to come."

"I was just going to say, that if she could have

entire change for the next month, I thought she would then be fit to go back. Of course you must ask Mrs. Travers to let her do a moderate amount of study for the present ; but it seems a pity she should lose any more time than is absolutely unavoidable."

"Then you think she must go into the country ? I suppose it would be the best thing for her ; but I don't like to leave the children again so soon."

"Well, think about it, and let's see what can be done ; perhaps you can get somebody else to go with her. Good-bye for the present."

"What can make mamma so silent this morning ?" said Hetty to herself, as they sat together in what was called Mrs. Brewster's morning-room about an hour afterwards. Hetty was busy with some fancy work for a sale in aid of the funds of a school in which Mrs. Brewster was interested, and not being particularly fond of needlework, was feeling rather dull. "Something has vexed her. I'm afraid she has been talking to papa a long time this morning. I wonder what about. It can't be about any of his patients, because mamma says he hates being asked about them ; it can't be about cleaning the house, for papa never will have anything to do with that ; it can't be about the Daltons, because they're away, which is a comfort. What can it be ? I feel so curious. I must try and make mamma talk, and then, perhaps, she will tell me."

In pursuance of this determination, Hetty plied her mother with a variety of questions, all of which Mrs. Brewster answered in so absent a manner, that her daughter's curiosity was only the more aroused. Yes, she certainly thought that maize would be the best colour for the grounding of Hetty's wool-work; she didn't know when the Daltons would come back; she had heard from Mrs. Travers, and school was to begin again the end of the week. "I have not hit on the right thing yet," thought Hetty. "What can it be? Oh, perhaps that Miss Forbes is ill again. I'll ask." But before she had determined how to frame the question, a servant entered the room with a letter on a waiter, and handing it to Hetty, said that "Mr. Frank Dalton had left it; it had been enclosed in a letter from his father."

Mrs. Brewster looked up surprised. "A letter to you from Miss Dalton, my dear. What can she be writing to you about?"

"It is not from Miss Dalton, it is from Florence Benson. How strange! how could her letter come inside one from Mr. Dalton, mamma? how very queer."

"Very strange, indeed, my dear; but read it, and see what she says. Papa has just been telling me that the Daltons and the Bensons have become acquainted down at Westhayes, but still that hardly

accounts for Florence having sent her letter to you in one from Mr. Dalton to his son."

"No, indeed, mamma, and I can't make it out. The first part is all about my illness, how sorry she was, and so on; but then she talks about her engagement, of which no doubt we have heard. How should we, when she has not written to me for more than two months? She is sure I shall be pleased, as when she is in town she shall be delighted to see me. It is so nice to think she is marrying an old friend of mine; what can she mean? Why does she not say who it is. Mamma, isn't it strange; can you guess who it can be?"

"Frank Dalton, I imagine, from his bringing the letter; but I am very much surprised. From all you have told me, Hetty, about Florence, I should think they are quite unsuited to each other."

"Oh, mamma, that cannot be, I'm sure. Why, Frank Dalton is so strict and severe, and Florence hates religion, at least I mean, she is so very gay, she could never like him, I'm sure."

"Nor he her, I should have thought," replied Mrs. Brewster; "but Florence is pretty, is she not, Hetty? perhaps that has made him forget other things much more important."

Hetty still looked doubtful. "I can hardly believe it," she said; "but, mamma, Frank will be very rich, will he not?"

"Yes, Hetty; I hardly know what he has at present, but Mr. Dalton is immensely rich, and Frank is the eldest son; perhaps that will enable Florence to forget his over strictness, as she will consider it."

"Florence always said she would not marry a man with less than ten thousand a year, mamma," said Hetty; "and I remember once that she said if she had plenty of money and a husband who let her do as she chose, she could be perfectly happy."

"A strange idea of happiness," said Mrs. Brewster; "well, I'm very sorry, I don't see how you can congratulate her, Hetty; it is impossible that she can really care for Frank, or that they can be really happy together."

"Do you think papa will be in to lunch, mamma? I should so like to hear what he says about it."

"No, he will not be in till dinner-time. You can dine with us to-night, Hetty, if you like. I'm afraid papa will be very vexed, he rather likes Frank Dalton."

"Does he, mamma, I don't; do you? I think he is so conceited and thinks so much of his own opinion; I have seen him turn away from papa as if he thought his judgment worth nothing."

"No wonder you don't like him then, Hetty," said Mrs. Brewster, smiling; "but I'm going to get you to make a journey to the nursery, to ask

nurse to come and speak to me about your spring dresses ; that serge must be very warm, isn't it ?”

“Rather,” said Hetty, as she rose to obey ; “but, mamma, you will let me tell papa about Florence to-night, won't you ?”

“Certainly, if you wish it. You need not run, my dear, I'm in no hurry.”

Mr. Brewster was later than usual that evening, and Hetty, who was burning with impatience to tell him the news she had received, could hardly wait till the footman's departure from the dining-room left her at liberty to speak on the subject.

“Now, papa !” she exclaimed, “I've got some news for you ; guess what it is ?”

Mrs. Brewster laughed, and said, “I've been quite alarmed, Hetty, lest your impatience should get the better of your discretion, and your secret escape before Burns left the room.”

“Oh no, mamma, I did not want all the square to hear it,” replied Hetty ; “but now, papa, do guess.”

“I believe papa knows, he has been looking extremely amused ever since he came in.”

“Oh, do you, papa ; have you heard anything ?”

“A good many things in the course of the day ; but that does not prove I have heard your secret ; come, what is it ?”

“Oh, you must guess, papa ?”

"Can't; I never guess secrets, it's out of the question."

"It's something about a friend of mine, and a friend of yours, papa."

"A friend of mine and a friend of yours. Why, your friend must be Miss Benson; but who is it you call my friend, Hetty. I can't guess, I have so many friends."

"Oh, do try, papa; you are half right, Florence Benson is going to be married, and to a friend of yours; now you really must guess the rest."

"Florence Benson, is that it? Nonsense, it can't be," exclaimed Mr. Brewster, looking perfectly incredulous; "the man must be mad."

"I thought you would say so," said Mrs. Brewster; "such a gay, silly girl as Hetty describes her, she could never make him happy, with all his peculiar notions."

"Peculiar notions, what do you mean? we are talking at cross purposes," replied the doctor. "Who is the gentleman that Miss Benson means to honour with her hand?"

"Why, papa," said Hetty, laughing, "Florence wrote to tell me she was engaged, but she never said who to, and as Frank Dalton brought the letter, we thought he must be the happy man."

"Never said who to," replied her father, "then I think I can supply the name. I had a letter

to-day from Mr. Dalton, informing me that he was shortly about to take to himself as wife, a young lady with whom he believed I was slightly acquainted. I suppose he did not know that it was you and not I that was Miss Benson's friend. He had no doubt the news would give me pleasure, as I had frequently told him that cheerful society would do him more good than any medicine. He made some slight allusion to a trifling disparity of age, but assured me that that did not trouble his fair bride elect in the least. Now, Hetty, what do you think of your friend's prospects?"

Hetty looked perfectly stunned. "Papa, it must be a mistake," she exclaimed at last; "the idea of Florence Benson marrying that old man. Why, she is not quite eighteen."

"And he is not quite sixty, Hetty," replied the doctor, looking extremely amused. "Well, there's no accounting for tastes; perhaps your friend may sober down with such a steady old husband."

"Papa, don't call her my friend; I'm quite disgusted. Only think, mamma, she will be Frank's mother instead of his wife;" and Hetty laughed in spite of her vexation.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE CHOICE.

Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

TENNYSON.

"PAPA," said Hetty, opening the study-door one morning after breakfast, "I have got a favour to ask."

"Have you? Well, come in and ask it, then. Don't stand in the draught like that. Shut the door. Now, what is it?"

"Mamma says," continued Hetty, nervously, playing with a penknife which lay on the table, "that you are going down to Westhayes this afternoon, papa, and I thought I should so like to go with you. May I?"

"To see Mr. Dalton, Hetty? Why, you used to think it a perfect punishment to be sent with a message to him. Do you want to congratulate him on his approaching marriage?"

"No, papa; I would rather never see him again if I could help it. But I had a letter from Florence

yesterday. She said she should be at Westhayes to-day, and I thought I should like to see her. She asked me to go with you. May I?"

Mr. Brewster looked grave. "I thought you were quite disgusted with her," he said. "But what does mamma say about it, Hetty?"

"She told me to come and ask you, papa," replied Hetty. "She said that she did not mind my going with you, but she should not like me to go alone. You know, papa, I think it is horrid of Florence to marry this old man; but I should like to talk to her about it, because, if she really does care for him, it will be different."

Mr. Brewster smiled. "Well, you may go if you like," he said. "Mind you are ready by two o'clock."

Hetty thanked him warmly, and disappeared to go and read to her mother.

The plan for sending her to the seaside had been reluctantly abandoned, owing to Mrs. Brewster having been confined to her room for some time by a severe cold, and it being impossible to find any one else to accompany her. At first her father had proposed sending her and Gracie with a maid; but, when Hetty pleaded, with tears in her eyes, that she would so much rather stay at home, he could not refuse her request. And, indeed, after the first week or two from her return home, Hetty seemed to revive

so fast, that there was little reason to be uneasy about her.

“Not much the matter now,” was the doctor’s reflection, as he watched the keen delight with which she remarked upon the fresh spring verdure, the white blossoms of the hawthorn, and the tufts of primroses and anemones on the banks along the side of the railway. Her cheeks still wanted the colour which had formerly greatly added to the charm of her face, and every now and then a slightly saddened expression was visible in the lines around her mouth; but, altogether, Hetty’s countenance gave small evidence of ill-health or low spirits.

They had the compartment of the railway carriage to themselves; and as the doctor seated himself in one corner, and took a book out of his pocket, Hetty ensconced herself in the opposite one, saying, “Now, papa, you are going to be sociable, and talk to me. You are not going to read that book. I am sure it looks frightfully dull.”

“Does it? You are judging from the outside, which is never a safe method. But what am I to talk to you about?”

“Anything, papa. But first I want you to tell me when I am going back to school. I am quite strong now.”

“Are you? Well, I believe your mamma told Mrs. Travers she might expect you this day

week. The others have been back a fortnight, I think."

"Yes, just a fortnight," Hetty said, her voice faltering, and her eyelids quivering in a way very unusual to her.

There was a silence, and when Mr. Brewster looked up again—he had been busy cutting the leaves of his book—he was surprised to see she was positively crying.

"Why, my dear child, what's the matter? Here, come and sit here," exclaimed the doctor, drawing his daughter to him, and putting his arms fondly around her. "What's the matter? Don't you want to go back? I thought you looked very brave about it just now."

"Yes, I do want to go back. I'm a goose," replied Hetty through her sobs. "Only, just then I was thinking——"

"Well, what were you thinking?"

"Only that this day week I should be going back all by myself; that I should have to sleep in the same bed at school, and the next bed would be empty," sobbed Hetty. "But of course it must be; it can't be helped."

"If it can't be helped, you must make the best of it," replied her father, cheerily. "But it may be helped. Possibly mamma may be well enough to go down with you; and very likely Mrs. Travers

may have made some fresh arrangement about the beds. We will not break our hearts about evils that may never exist. You do not really mind going back to school, do you, Hetty?"

"Oh, no, papa; I am glad I am going back. I liked my lessons much better last term. I think I was getting on a little."

"I am glad to hear it. I believe Mrs. Travers thought so too. But you have still a great deal to do, Hetty, before you will be fit to leave school; and I don't want you to stay more than a year longer."

"But I shall go on by myself when I leave school, papa; and mamma said yesterday that perhaps you would let me have some music or singing-lessons to help me."

"To be sure. I should be very sorry if you were to fancy you are to give up everything in the way of study directly you leave Mrs. Travers. I hope you will get a taste for it, and have no wish to leave off when you come home."

Hetty was silent. She knew that naturally she had no great taste for study, and that she had a very decided predilection for books which her mamma thought were, at the best, but useless reading and waste of time; and she always feared that, in the end, her parents would be disappointed in her.

"Is it because I am stupid?" she said to herself. "Miss Rye never used to think me so, and I don't think Miss Travers does; and yet I can't get as fond of Latin as Maggie is, or think Roman History as intensely exciting as Ella professes to do, and if I ever do succeed in being first in any of the examinations, it will be because I want to please papa, and not because I really like the work. Perhaps the fact is that I'm lazy. Miss Kirton said one day, she thought I would rather do anything than give myself the trouble of thinking steadily for a few minutes, and I suppose that's a kind of laziness; and Mr. Dibdin said that I would believe anything I was told, without trying in the least to understand it."

Thus Hetty mused over her difficulties and deficiencies, till her father, who had opened his book, and was intent on its contents, looked at his watch, and said, "We are almost there, Hetty. Have you been thinking all this time what you are going to say to Mrs. Dalton that is to be?"

"Oh, no, papa; I had forgotten all about Florence. I wonder whether she will come to the station to meet us. They will send a carriage, won't they?"

"Probably, for it's such a scrap of a village, that I believe they do not possess a fly; but, as she does not know that you are coming, I should hardly

think she will do *me* the honour of coming to meet me."

"Unless Mr. Dalton were to drive down to the station, papa. Oh, see! is this it? There is a waggonette waiting. What a funny little station! Yes, there is Florence, and Rowland Dalton is driving; and there's Charlie waiting on the platform."

"I hope they will be dutiful step-sons," said Mr. Brewster, as the young man approached the carriage door, and greeting his friends with great heartiness and cordiality, helped Hetty to alight.

"Your train is late," he said. "Are you tired? You look very pale."

"Hetty is not quite herself yet," replied Mr. Brewster, as he followed Charlie Dalton to the carriage. "How do you do, Rowland; I hope we haven't kept you waiting?"

"No, not many minutes. Will you get up here? How do you do, Miss Brewster? Do you know Miss Benson, Mr. Brewster?"

The doctor bowed, and then Hetty and Charlie Dalton having seated themselves, the party drove off.

The drive to Westhayes was a short one, and the conversation on the road, though confined to general subjects, was lively and amusing. Florence seemed in the highest possible spirits, but she

rather winced under the keen glance with which Mr. Brewster, from time to time, regarded her.

They were all glad when they reached the house; and Florence, seizing Hetty's hand, exclaimed, "You will come for a stroll with me round the garden, won't you, while your papa is with Mr. Dalton? It is such a pretty place, and I want to have you to myself."

Hetty glanced at her father.

"You will not tire her, Miss Benson?" he said; "she is not strong yet, and the railway is always fatiguing." Then, turning to Hetty, he added, "Don't forget; I have only an hour to stay; mind, you are to be found at half-past four." Then, as the two girls ran off, he turned to the two young men who were standing by, and remarked, "I haven't congratulated you yet, Rowland. I hope you are pleased at the change your father contemplates. I should say it will make the old house a good deal more lively. Don't you think so?"

Rowland laughed, and replied, carelessly, "Very likely; but isn't it a charming arrangement? She's not quite eighteen, they say, and I'm close upon twenty, while Charlie's as old as she is. Don't you think my father has taken leave of his senses at last?"

The doctor smiled; while Charlie added, "Or, rather, don't you think Miss Benson has?"

"Not at all," Rowland replied, warmly; "*her* part of the business is quite comprehensible; but, for my father, who, up to the last month, has spent most part of his time on the sofa, saying every day would be his last—for him to think of marrying at all is perfectly ludicrous; and a young girl who cares for nothing but dancing, flirting, and playing croquet! Why, he must be fit for Bedlam, and no mistake. One comfort is, that he flatters himself he is coming in for a heap more money, and he'll find he's mistaken, or my name's not Dalton."

"Well, I should not think that signifies much," said Mr. Brewster.

"Doesn't it, though. Tell him that, and see what he'll say," exclaimed Rowland. "Why, hasn't he told you a dozen times that he is sure he shall die in the workhouse?"

"Perhaps so; and he imagines Miss Benson's money is to keep him from troubling the parish for a little longer, I suppose."

"Just so," replied Rowland; "but, as Miss Benson's money is easily counted, I'm rejoicing in the thought that he hasn't got quite such a bargain as he fancied."

"Spoken like a dutiful son," said Mr. Brewster, smiling; "but where shall I find your father?"

"Oh, I'll show you; come this way," replied Charlie, while Rowland shouted after them,

"Have a try at him, Brewster ; see if you can't bring the old fellow to reason."

"To reason, indeed," thought the doctor, as he lay back in the railway carriage, about two hours after this conversation, and thought over all that had passed between him and Mr. Dalton. "I doubt, indeed, whether his reason is quite in its right place. A prey to delusions of the most extraordinary description he most certainly is. That constant idea that he shall come to grief, and die in a workhouse, which he has been harping upon for the last twenty years ; that notion that he has every disease that was ever heard of ; that all his employ  s are cheating him ; and now this extravagant fancy for Miss Benson ; and then the fear that seems to haunt him now, that in case he gets well, and does not need my attendance, I shall be utterly ruined. I'm sure I'd give a good deal more than he's ever given me to get him well, and have done with him." And here the doctor jerked one leg over the other with such violence, that Hetty, who up to this moment had remained quite silent, started, and said, "Is anything the matter, papa ?"

Mr. Brewster laughed. "No," he said, "nothing particular, Hetty. I forgot you were here, my dear. Well, and how did you get on with your friend ?"

"Oh, papa !" replied Hetty, "it is dreadful ; I

shall never want to see Florence again, she seems to have no feeling at all."

"Why, I thought she seemed very glad to see you. I'm sure she kissed you a great many times."

"Oh, yes; but that's nothing. I don't believe she cares for me, and I'd rather she didn't kiss me so much. But I wasn't thinking of myself, papa; it was the way she talked about almost everybody. She told me not to go and tell you all she said, papa; but I think I shall. I would not promise not to tell, because I felt so angry; shall I tell you, papa?"

"I think you had better, Hetty."

"Well, let me see. I asked her, you know, papa, when the wedding was to be, and she said this month. Only think, poor Ada only died two months ago; and it is to be such a grand affair. Then I said, I was afraid much excitement would not be good for Mr. Dalton, who had been an invalid so long, and she laughed, and said, 'She didn't think there was much the matter with him; doctors were fond of making people believe they were ill for their own benefit.' Just think of her saying that to me, papa!" exclaimed Hetty, in great agitation.

"She must be a brave young lady, certainly," said the doctor, smiling at her excitement; "and what did you say, Hetty?"

"I said," replied Hetty, warmly, "that Mr. Dalton would be a great deal more trouble than profit to any doctor. That's quite true, is it not, papa?"

"Supposing it is, which you certainly are not in a position to decide, Hetty, it was not a very polite thing to say."

"No, perhaps not, papa; but I cannot bear to hear people hint that you keep people ill for the sake of the money you make out of them; and, besides, was it not rude of Florence to say such a thing to me?"

"No doubt it was; but is that all that has annoyed you so?"

"No, papa; I'm sure she does not care a straw for Mr. Dalton. She says they will get on very well together, that her father is anxious she should be married, and she said a great deal about her position and her house in town. Oh! it was horrid, and she means to turn Miss Dalton out too; she says she cannot put up with her. I never heard anything so rude and so unlady-like. She is quite changed in the last few months."

"Are you sure of that, Hetty?"

"Yes, papa, she never talked in that way at school; at least, not quite in that way," replied Hetty. "I couldn't have liked her if she had."

"She was in a different position," replied Mr.

Brewster, "that may have made some difference. But, Hetty, what will you do when Mrs. Dalton comes to her house in town, you will be almost next-door neighbours, and your intimacy at school will make her expect to see a great deal of you."

"She won't," said Hetty, vehemently. "I'm not going to see her, papa, if she talks in that way of you."

"She is hardly likely to do so," replied Mr. Brewster, quietly.

"But anyhow, papa, I can't see much of her. I'm sure she does me no good, and she makes me feel very angry."

"Still you must be polite to her, Hetty. We have no right to make friends and cast them off just at the impulse of the moment. I quite agree with you that she will do you no good; nay, more, I think she *has* done you no good, but the reverse. You see, now, the necessity of being careful who you choose for your friends, don't you?"

"Yes, papa; but I don't see the use in my keeping up my friendship with Florence. I don't like her at all now, and I can't think why she likes me."

"Perhaps not; but as for some reason or other she does like you, or profess to do so, you must not neglect the opportunity for good that this will give you, and in the intercourse you will have in future,

you must try to return good for evil. You will have mamma to help you. It is quite possible to be very selfish in our friendships, Hetty. You know you often laugh at Frank Dalton for being so particular not to call any one a friend, or care for any one's acquaintance, with whom he does not thoroughly agree. I heard you say the other day that he would not do much good in the world at that rate."

"But, papa, Frank Dalton is so much older than I am, and so much steadier of course."

"No doubt he is; but here we are rapidly getting into the smoke of London. You will be in the country again in a week, you fortunate child."

"Oh, papa, how nice it would be if we could all live in the country," said Hetty, eagerly; "don't you often long to?"

"Sometimes; perhaps we will when I am an old man, past work, and good for nothing but weeding flower-beds."

"Oh, papa, what a horrible idea!" exclaimed Hetty.

"Is it," said the doctor, laughing; "I thought it sounded very pleasant, for even supposing my back should be too stiff from rheumatism to make stooping agreeable, I should still be able to sit in the shade and watch you do it, unless you, like your friend, should have met with an old man who wants a wife to take care of him."

"Papa, how can you talk of such things?" said Hetty, "why, if you were ever so old, and ever so stiff, I believe you'd find something better to do than sitting under a tree watching me weeding flower-beds."

"You forget, Hetty, that with old age the powers of the mind generally fail, and by the time we are speaking of, I may have lost all relish for reading and literary amusements, and have about as much sense as a turnip."

"Papa!" said Hetty, indignantly.

"Well, my dear, what's the matter? See, here we are slowly creeping into the station; put your veil down, it is getting chilly."

CHAPTER XVI.

EVELYN.

Pride cannot see itself by midday light—
The peacock's tail is farthest from his sight.

BARTON HOLYDAY.

"You are going to take lessons easily this quarter, are you not, Hetty?" said Ella Wharton to her the day after she had returned to school; "I mean you are not going to take so many classes, are you?"

"Not for a week or two, I believe; but I hope I shall soon begin everything again. Mamma said I had better not do any drawing at present; that will make a good deal of difference, won't it?"

"Yes, and missing that won't throw you back for the examinations," said Ella; "Hetty, did you know Agnes is going to leave in the middle of the term?"

"No, why is that? I didn't know she was going at all at present, though of course she's rather old to be at school."

"She is wanted at home, I believe. I'm very sorry; it will seem so strange without Agnes."

"And you will be the oldest, Ella," said Hetty.

"Yes ; we all grow old," sighed Ella ; "but, Hetty, I quite forgot till this moment that Miss Travers sent me to tell you that she wants to speak to you in the study, something about your lessons, I think she said."

Hetty left the room, and Ella, thus left alone, turned from the window where she had been standing while talking to Hetty, and sat down at the school-room table. The calisthenic lesson was going forward in the children's school-room, and most of the girls were there. Ella always looked forward to this quiet time for the preparation of her most difficult lessons, and a few minutes after Hetty had left the room, she was intent upon some German which had already been pronounced untranslatable by some of the other girls.

"Utterly incomprehensible, it won't turn into English," she muttered to herself several times ; "there's no verb to be seen for six lines, at least ; I believe the man's forgotten to put it in ; I should think they must sometimes, when they have three or four verbs to put at the end of a sentence. What shall I do with it ; here, Evelyn"—Evelyn Dunmow at this moment entered the room—"you lived in Germany, and of course know more German than most of us ; do take pity on me, and tell me what this means."

"Let me see," replied Evelyn, greatly flattered by this compliment; "oh, I tried that sentence to-day, and gave it up in despair; there must be some misprint, it won't make sense."

"And yet we very often say so, and when Herr Reinhardt reads it, throwing the emphasis on the right place, it becomes quite easy," said Ella. "I wish I could make it out."

"What is it," said Hetty, who, at that moment, returned to the school-room, "the German translation; oh, is it very difficult?"

"Frightful," said Evelyn, "there isn't a word of sense in it from beginning to end."

"Oh, I don't see that," replied Ella; "I could make sense till I came to this piece. Look here, Hetty, it is Max Piccolomini that is speaking to Octavio; can you make it out?" and Ella read the first part of the sentence, concluding with, "and there I'm lost, the rest is utterly unintelligible."

Hetty took the book into her own hand, while Ella threw herself back in her chair and yawned.

"It's not very likely you can make it out, if Ella can't, Hetty," said Evelyn, rather contemptuously; "what is the use in your wasting your time?"

"I may as well try," replied Hetty, and Ella added,

"Oh, you're just as likely to make it out as I am, Hetty, and I do hope you will; it will be

conferring a favour on the whole class, for we've all given it up in despair. Oh, have you got a glimmer? she added, eagerly, as a bright thought seemed to strike Hetty.

"I was thinking," said Hetty, timidly, "that you seemed to me to make a stop in the wrong place. Don't you think it might mean this," and with some difficulty, she picked out the correct meaning of the passage, adding, "of course, that's bad English; but don't you think it's the meaning?"

"I shouldn't wonder," exclaimed Ella, "I never thought of that. What do you say, Evelyn; don't you think that's it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; I've forgotten what the German is now. Oh, I daresay it may be right; don't make such a fuss," she added, as Ella rose to show her the place in the book.

"Well, Hetty, I'm sure I'm infinitely obliged to you," said Ella. "I shall come to you next time I'm puzzled; I hope you won't mind being my dictionary, dear."

"What an absurd way you do go on, Ella," said Evelyn, as Hetty took up her music, and went off to practice, declaring that she pitied anybody who used her as a dictionary; "you'll make that girl more conceited than ever. Why, she knows no more German than little Carrie; that was only a lucky guess of hers."

"I think you're quite mistaken," replied Ella, shortly.

"In thinking she knows no German, or saying she is conceited?" inquired Evelyn, with rising colour.

"In both," said Ella, resolutely.

Evelyn looked rather discomfited: she peculiarly disliked being answered in that short way, but determined not to be put down, she continued, "It would be strange, indeed, if she wasn't conceited, considering all the fuss you and Maggie, and Bertha, and Mrs. and Miss Travers made with her yesterday."

Ella looked up with an angry flush on her face, "Evelyn, how can you be so absurd," she exclaimed, "you know perfectly well why we made what you call a fuss. Hetty was coming to school for the first time without Ada, and she had been dangerously ill; wasn't it perfectly natural that anybody with a grain of feeling should try to make her forget all the sad things that had happened here?"

"Oh, I daresay it might have been; I would rather have been let alone if I had been her, but some people like a great demonstration of affection; but I don't see that flattering her about her German would help her to forget the past, unless by the past you mean Herr Reinhardt's lecture to her last term."

"I mean nothing of the sort," Ella retorted, warmly; "but if you must know my reason for flattering Hetty, as you persist I did, I will tell you. Hetty has been scolded about her lessons till she has positively got it into her head that she is a dunce, and that everybody thinks her so. You know as well as I do that that is far from being the case, and I said what I did, and if I get the chance, I intend to say a great deal more, in the hopes of undeceiving her."

"Well, no doubt you think you know best," said Evelyn, sneeringly; "and as I don't suppose you'd take my advice, I'll keep it to myself."

"I don't suppose I should," said Ella; and there the conversation dropped.

Evelyn Dunmow was the eldest daughter of a clergyman, who had a large parish in one of the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire. He had but a limited income, and a large family to maintain. At home, therefore, the elder children had been obliged to assist their mother in every way in their power; and Evelyn, who was of an aspiring nature, clever, and managing, had been accustomed to consider herself a woman ever since she was twelve years old. She was her mother's right hand. Mrs. Dunmow did not know what would become of her with all that tribe of little ones, and the parish as well to look after, if she had not been blessed with

such a daughter. All this, and more, Evelyn had been accustomed to hear for years past, and when, therefore, at the age of sixteen, an offer was made by a rich relative to give her and her next sister a year or two at a finishing school, and the offer was gratefully accepted by her parents, her pride received a most serious wound.

"You will be quite done up, mamma, and have to send for me back again before I have been gone a month ; and I am sure it is most unnecessary. You have said a hundred times that I know twice as much as you did when you married," so pleaded Evelyn, hoping to avert what she greatly dreaded, having to mix with silly, frivolous girls, such as there always were at ladies' schools.

"But, my dear," replied Mrs. Dunmow, "you forget what I have often told you, that if anything happened to dear papa, you would most likely have to earn your own living as a governess ; and though we have done the best we could for you, and you have never indulged in idle, foolish novel reading, still your education has been sadly irregular, and you must see that a year's study under good masters will be of immense value to you."

Evelyn did not see it. "I believe there are lots of governesses who don't know half as much as I do," she replied.

"Very likely, my dear, but, of course, the more

you know the better situation you would get; and though of course I shall find it hard to get along without you, yet it would be most selfish of me to refuse such a kind offer as your uncle has made. It makes me so much happier, too, in parting with Clara, to feel that you will be with her; she cannot get into much mischief while you are there to watch over her."

There was no help for it, so Evelyn submitted; and, in fact, when she considered the matter more thoroughly, the prospect was not altogether displeasing to her. She liked change; home-life, cheered as it was by her parents' constant approval and admiration, became sometimes monotonous; and the picture that her imagination drew of herself, the first in every class, universally considered the cleverest and most beautiful girl in the school, was extremely pleasing to her proud disposition.

Hitherto she had associated but little with girls of her own age. "Somehow or other I never get on with them," she frequently said to her mother, and Mrs. Dunmow replied, "Because you are so much older in mind than in years, my dear;" and Evelyn was well satisfied with this explanation. She had, of course, no idea that while she looked down upon them as empty-headed and frivolous, the young ladies of her father's congregation avoided

and disliked her, because they thought her proud and consequential.

To a girl of this description, it may readily be imagined school-life speedily became no bed of roses. At first, it is true, many of the girls, judging from her lady-like appearance, and the pains with which she prepared her lessons, thought that she would be an agreeable addition to their party; while they admired and liked Clara for her devoted affection and admiration for her sister.

But, as time went on, the spirit of rivalry and emulation, which is harmless and even useful so long as it gives rise to no unkindness, awoke to life and energy a passion in Evelyn's breast to which she had hitherto been a stranger. At home she had stood first in everything; none of her sisters or acquaintances could play, work, draw, or do anything as well as she could. So at least she had always thought, but now things were different. Agnes, Maggie, Ella, Bertha, and even Hetty now frequently surpassed her. She could not deceive herself into fancying that such was not the case, and day after day envy and jealousy raged more and more in her heart. She knew it, but the consciousness gave her little uneasiness, for she persuaded herself that it arose merely from her anxiety to excel—a laudable anxiety, she told herself, in which she was surely right to indulge.

That any one was at all aware how much she

disliked Maggie for answering questions which she was unable to reply to, or guessed how cross she felt when Mademoiselle one day remarked that Agnes Melville was the most amiable girl in the school, never entered her head. How could they tell, she never said a word?

But they did know it nevertheless, and many were the laughs and jokes which were made at her expense for this very reason.

"Don't learn your poetry perfectly to-day, Ella," whispered Bertha, one morning. "Poor Evelyn will be in despair if you get complimented again;" or another time, "Mr. Berners is very dense; he does not appreciate talent, he cares nothing for feeling and pathos in music, or he would see that Evelyn plays her sonata slowly, in order that she may give full expression to Beethoven's feelings, and not at all because she doesn't know it, and is afraid of stumbling or breaking down altogether."

"Doesn't she know it? I thought how well she played it to Mr. Berners yesterday," said Hetty, in reply; "but I only heard it through the wall in the next room. I told her she would make quite a sensation if she played it like that at Mrs. Travers' party next Tuesday."

"Did you really, Hetty; well, you will be in favour for a week at least on the strength of that

compliment; but I believe you heard Mr. Berners playing it, and not Evelyn at all; he was playing it when I went in for my lesson."

"Was he?" said Hetty, looking very vexed; "I wonder Evelyn didn't say so. But what are you going to play at the party, Bertha?"

"I, oh, I shall stumble away at my Rondo, I suppose. Hetty, mind you play your Moonlight Sonata; Evelyn said yesterday she believed she was the only one who was going to play a piece of really classical music."

"The Moonlight is much too long," replied Hetty; "I'm going to play a short piece. But who is coming to this party, do you know?"

"Mrs. Travers says it is not a party," said Bertha; "only a few people coming to hear us play. I hope they'll enjoy it; why, they might hear that any day, all three pianos at once if they liked to stand in the hall for five minutes."

"What are you going to wear, Bertha?" inquired Hetty, after a minute's silence.

"Well, that's rather a difficulty to me," replied Bertha, her round face looking very grave. "I asked Miss Travers whether we were to make ourselves grand, and she said our Sunday dresses would do very well, or if we had white muslins we could put them on. So I took the trouble to go upstairs on purpose to look at my white dress, pulled it out

of the drawers, and the stupid thing caught in some nail or something, and tore a rent as long as my arm."

"Won't it mend?" inquired Hetty.

"Perhaps it might; but I'm afraid it won't mend itself. I think I must try and coax one of the maids to do it for me."

"That's just like you, Bertha," said Hetty, laughing; "I wonder whether all the girls mean to wear white."

"Evelyn is mysterious about her dress," remarked Bertha, "I asked her about it last night, and she gave me no answer, only asked me what I was going to wear in my hair?"

"What did you say?"

"I said I didn't mean to wear anything, it's too much trouble," replied Bertha. "I haven't the faculty of tying bits of ribbon into my hair properly, they always twist round and get into the wrong place. But what do you think she asked me next?"

"I can't tell, I am sure," said Hetty; "you two seem to talk about such queer things when you go to bed."

"She asked me who I thought would look the best," continued Bertha, in high glee, "and I said of course I should; you can't think how amazed she looked; I believe she thought I meant it."

Hetty laughed. "Who did she say would look best?" she inquired.

"My dear, I didn't give her the chance of saying, but of course there can be no doubt who she thinks. But I didn't tell you that she says she means to wear some real may in her hair, isn't that a grand idea?"

"Where will she get it from? it's all over," said Hetty.

"So I said, but she declares there is some on the hedge at the bottom of the garden," replied Bertha, "if it will only be kind enough not to fade before Tuesday."

"I daresay she'll look very nice," said Hetty; "she's the prettiest girl in the school, only it's a pity she's so well aware of it."

"There may be differences of opinion about who's the prettiest," answered Bertha, "though I agree with you that she has no doubt about the matter."

Bertha was perfectly well aware that much of Evelyn's jealousy of Hetty, which at times was so evident that no one could fail to observe it, was owing to some remarks which she had overheard pass between some of her companions in admiration of the latter's personal appearance. This, of course, Hetty did not know, and Bertha was too sensible to allude to it.

Tuesday evening came, lessons were over for the

day, and the girls dispersed to their rooms to dress. "I shall be ready first," exclaimed Bertha, as she ran off to the room which she shared with Evelyn and Clara; "that's to say unless I have to act lady's maid to these two," she added in an under tone to Maggie, who was close to her. "But I must make haste, I want to strum over my piece once more; I never can play on that drawing-room piano, it's so stiff."

"Clara," Evelyn was saying as Bertha entered the room, "I don't think I shall wear this pink ribbon in my hair; pink never suits me, have you any blue satin or velvet?"

"Why, didn't you get any may after all?" exclaimed Bertha, interrupting her; "I thought it looked very tolerably fresh this morning."

"It was too faded," Evelyn replied, "and yet I almost wish I'd got it. I'm so tired of ribbon. Do you think this blue suits me, Bertha?" taking a piece from her sister's hand and laying it across her head.

"Oh, I know nothing about such things," said Bertha; "but I should think blue is better than pink; pink and yellow is not a good mixture, is it?"

"Yellow," said Evelyn, "I'm not going to wear any yellow; my dress is white."

"But your hair; that's what I meant. That's a kind of yellow, isn't it?"

"Yellow! What next, I wonder!" exclaimed Evelyn, as she turned away scornfully.

While Bertha remarked to herself, "I've got into a scrape now. Well, she won't ask me for any more help, that's one comfort."

Bertha's toilet was soon completed. I do not say that a little more time might not have been spent on it with advantage; but she was in a hurry to escape from Evelyn, whose anxiety about her dress worried her. She was always the slowest of the three; and though, on this particular evening, she detained Clara for some time to assist her, yet even she had been some time in the drawing-room, and still no Evelyn made her appearance.

"She will be something very astonishing when she does make her appearance," whispered Agnes to Ella, as the first of Mrs. Travers' guests appeared, and still Evelyn's toilet did not seem to be completed.

Ella made no reply; but, when ten minutes or a quarter of an hour had elapsed, and still Evelyn did not appear, she slipped out of the room to go in search of her. She was absent some minutes, during which Miss Travers had perceived the absence of Evelyn, and anxiously inquired what she was doing.

"Ella has gone to look for her, Miss Travers," replied Maggie. "Oh! here she is. Well, she

doesn't seem to have found her. Ella, what's the matter? Can't she succeed in decorating herself to her satisfaction?"

"I can't find her," said Ella. "She's vanished." Then, as Miss Travers approached, she added, louder, "Evelyn has disappeared, Miss Travers. She's not to be found anywhere."

"Oh, she can't be lost. I daresay she'll make her appearance in a few minutes," replied Miss Travers. "You missed her, I daresay; but she has been a very long time dressing."

"More than an hour," said Ella. "I think it's very mysterious. Perhaps she's run away. Clara, do you know anything of your sister?"

"She was almost dressed when I came down," replied Clara. "I can't think what she is doing. Shall I go and look for her?"

"Yes, do," said Maggie and Ella together. "She'll be wanted to play shortly. Make haste."

Clara went; but she, too, returned in a few minutes, saying she had been all over the house, and had called her sister, and had got no answer. She looked quite alarmed; and Mrs. Travers, who had been talking to her friends while these consultations were going on, now discovered what was passing, and began to look seriously uneasy.

"Will you excuse me for a minute?" she said to the vicar of the parish, with whom she had been

talking. "One of my lambs seems to be missing, and I must see what is wrong. It is very strange," she added, a moment after, "she was in her room half an hour ago, and now she is not to be found."

"Very strange indeed. Perhaps she is hiding. It may be some trick. Perhaps she thinks she will give us a game at hide and seek."

"Oh, that is not likely. But I have sent two or three girls to have a regular hunt, and I suppose they will find her."

But, no! No such success attended their efforts, and one by one Hetty, Ella, and Bertha returned, saying they could not conceive what had become of her. Bertha alone seemed to have some suspicion, which she was unwilling to divulge; but she begged for leave to go and look in the garden.

"Certainly, if you like. Tell the servants to go too, my dear, and put a shawl and goloshes on; it is damp. Oh, Mr. Ridley is going too. But what can she be doing in the garden?"

"It is a regular game at hide and seek," said the old vicar to Ella, as Maggie and Bertha raced down the garden-path in front of them, calling Evelyn by name as loud as they could. "But, if the young lady does not show herself soon, it will be rather more than a joke."

"Yes; Mrs. Travers is getting quite frightened," replied Ella. "It is very wrong of Evelyn

to play such a trick. Oh! what was that?" she cried, as a branch of a tree waving in the night-breeze caught her attention.

"Nothing but the branch of a tree," said Mr. Ridley. "Your two young friends have disappeared, Miss Wharton."

"They have gone into the meadow. What can be the use of that?" cried Ella. "Oh, Mr. Ridley, do you see that?" pointing to what looked very like a figure moving stealthily along under the shelter of the opposite hedge. "Evelyn!" she screamed, "is that you?"

At this sound the form seemed to move faster; and, as Mr. Ridley and Ella prepared to cross the wide grass-plot, Evelyn—for it was she—quickened her pace to a run, and, as she perceived that she was followed, almost flew along the path till she reached the side entrance to the house, where she at last disappeared.

"I am sure it was her," said Ella. "Maggie, Bertha, here; she's found!" And, as the two girls came running up, she related what she had seen, adding, "She's got in the back way, and I expect she's gone up to her bed-room. What can she have been doing out here. Let's go and look for her."

They raced off, and the vicar more slowly followed, to tell what had happened to the anxious

group in the drawing-room. Meanwhile, Maggie, fleet of foot, had sped up the staircase to Evelyn's bed-room, and, long before they overtook her, peals of merry laughter in some degree prepared Ella and Bertha for the sight which presented itself to them when they pushed open the door. There, in what had once been a delicate muslin dress, stood Evelyn; but dress, hair, and face were all so stained and smeared with a kind of green mud, that she looked as unlike the elegant, graceful Evelyn whom Bertha had left there a short time before, as it is possible to conceive. And yet there was something so intensely ludicrous in her deplorable appearance, that, after a moment's gaze of astonishment, Ella and Bertha found it utterly impossible to resist the infection of Maggie's mirth.

"Where have you been, Evelyn?" inquired Ella, at length, when she had gained sufficient breath to speak; "why, you are soaked, and covered from head to foot with mud."

"Green mud," said Bertha. "Evelyn, do look at yourself in the glass; you've a great piece of weed sticking in your hair."

"What is all this noise about?" inquired Miss Travers, entering the room at this moment. "What have you been doing, Evelyn? my mother has been quite frightened about you."

"Do look at her, Miss Travers," exclaimed

Maggie, with another burst of laughter ; “do you wonder she didn’t appear at the party now?”

“Hush, Maggie ; and you, Evelyn, tell me what you’ve been doing?” said Miss Travers, gravely.

Evelyn tried to explain, that thinking she should like some may for her hair, she had gone down the garden to get some, but that the best pieces being on the other side of the hedge, she had gone into the meadow ; it was so dark and damp that—— She stopped, and seemed half inclined to cry.

“That you slipped, and fell into that stagnant pond, I suppose,” said Miss Travers. “No wonder you are in such a state. But when did this happen, Evelyn ? You must have been out of the house some time.”

“I did not like to come back till I was sure everybody would be in the drawing-room,” Evelyn explained. “I did not want to meet any of the visitors in this state, nor the girls either,” she added, angrily. “I can’t see what they find to laugh at in my accident ; other people have tumbled into a pond before me.”

“Ella and Maggie, you had better go down to the drawing-room,” replied Miss Travers ; “my mother will want to hear about this strange expedition of Evelyn’s. Bertha, you can wait and help Evelyn to undress, she is shivering, and must go

straight to bed. Come, Evelyn, make haste and pull off that muddy dress ; you will catch cold if you stand in it any longer."

Evelyn tried to obey, but her fingers were so cold that it was some time before she was undressed, and she coldly refused all help from Bertha, who could not altogether conquer her inclination to laugh when she pictured to herself Evelyn struggling in the green stagnant pool.

"You had much better laugh too, Evelyn," said Miss Travers, "instead of looking so cross and indignant. If you had hurt yourself, it would have been another matter, though even then I should hardly have pitied you. Why could you not be content to dress like your sister? Really, it was too silly of you to run out, a cold, damp evening like this, with thin shoes on."

Evelyn made no reply ; but when Miss Travers had left the room, and Bertha inquired if she would like the candle left, she replied rather more graciously, "Yes, please ; and if I am to lie here all the evening, I may as well have a book. Will you get me one?"

"What will you have?" inquired Bertha ; "a lesson-book or a story-book?"

"Oh, something lively ; it's dull enough up here."

"Let me see," said Bertha, rather mischievously,

"shall I ask Mrs. Travers to lend you the volume of the 'Fairchild Family,' which has the account of Henry's tumble into the pigs'-wash? There are some moral reflections on the subject which you might find useful in your present circumstances. You remember the good advice which Betty Stubbs, or Stubbins—I forget which—gave to Henry. I used to think it very interesting when I was small. Oh, that's the very book! I'll fetch it at once."

"Hateful girl!" exclaimed Evelyn, as Bertha left the room without allowing her time to speak, "will she really go and ask Mrs. Travers for that silly book, I wonder? She can't be so absurd."

Bertha had no intention of doing anything of the sort, she was merely giving way to an innate love of teasing; and when she returned with an armful of books, there certainly was no "Fairchild Family" among them.

But Evelyn was in no mood to read. She pictured to herself the amusement of the party in the drawing-room when they heard of the accident her vanity had occasioned; and when she remembered Maggie's bursts of laughter, and the droll way in which she was wont to describe anything that amused her, she felt as if she could never face all the girls next morning.

It was so provoking too, to think that after all she had missed the party, and so lost the oppor-

tunity of exhibiting the musical talent on which she prided herself, and "that conceited Hetty will be noticed and remarked upon as if nobody had ever had a pair of fine eyes before in the world; and I shouldn't wonder if she played her Sonata too, and then people seeing Beethoven on the cover will fancy she has a talent for music; it will do her no end of harm."

Thus Evelyn vexed herself, and grumbled till the sound of departing carriages and the tramping of feet on the stairs warned her that the girls were coming up to bed. "Hush, go quietly," she heard Mrs. Travers say, and the next minute the rustle of a silk dress outside her door made her resolve to shut her eyes and pretend to be asleep, and thus avoid the lecture that she feared might be impending.

Meanwhile, in the other bed-rooms, the tongues were hard at work. "Oh! Hetty, you missed a sight," said Maggie; "didn't she, Ella?"

"Yes, you did, Hetty," replied Ella; "you can't imagine the state she was in, and yet all the while she was trying to look dignified and offended, because we laughed so. Why, Miss Travers couldn't help laughing."

"I should think not," said Hetty, "a dip in that pond would make anybody a queer sight, but it's a good thing she didn't get hurt. What shall

we say to her to-morrow morning, must we ask her how she is?"

"I shall begin to laugh again if I do," said Maggie, "and that will offend her majesty more than ever."

"Yes, we mustn't laugh any more," replied Ella; and Hetty added, "It wouldn't be kind."

"I suppose it's very unpleasant to be laughed at," said Maggie, thoughtfully, "perhaps we oughtn't to have gone on as we did, Ella?"

"She should have laughed too," said Ella, "but what makes you look so solemn, Hetty?"

"I was thinking," said Hetty, "that if there's one thing in the world I particularly dislike, it is being laughed at, especially when I am perfectly well aware I have done something very ridiculous; and I often think Evelyn and I are something alike."

"Not much," replied Ella; "but you're right, Hetty, we must try and keep our faces straight to-morrow, it would not be half so difficult if Evelyn would have the sense to laugh at herself."

"It would be very unpleasant for her to come down to-morrow morning and find us all laughing at her still," said Hetty. "No doubt she thinks we have done nothing else all the evening."

"We had something better to do," replied Maggie. "Ella, how well Agnes played to-night."

"We all got on much better than I expected," Ella answered; and thus, in discussing the events of the evening, Evelyn's mishap was for a time forgotten.

Hetty did not take much part in the conversation. She was tired and out of spirits, and made haste to bed. Though she knew not why, she felt strangely discontented and unhappy. When she returned to school at the beginning of the month, full of earnest purpose of redeeming lost time, and living as a Christian should live, she had thought little of the difficulties that she was sure to meet with. Now, every day she was learning, as we all learn by bitter experience, what a foe she had to contend with in her own sinful heart, and how perfectly powerless she was in herself to resist temptation. One thing had especially troubled her during the last few days, and in her anxious watchfulness over herself, she took blame to herself without due cause. Evelyn's jealousy and dislike of her was growing daily more apparent. There was no visible cause for it, as far as Hetty could discover; and yet she found it hard to believe that it was not, in some degree at least, her own fault. The fact was that, just at this period, it was Hetty's earnest wish to live in love and charity with all around her; and while others—Bertha, Maggie, Ella, and most of the girls—noticed and rejoiced in her increasing friend-

liness, it vexed and annoyed her that by no effort could she win Evelyn to equal amiability.

Instead of improving, matters seemed to go from bad to worse, so that there seldom passed a day in which, by some trifling act, Evelyn did not contrive to make Hetty uncomfortable; and Hetty, who had never been famous for self-control, had frequently to reproach herself for having given utterance to very angry thoughts. In the day-time this state of things troubled Hetty but little; but when quiet in her bed at night, or when, as on this evening, tired and over-excited, she found it almost impossible to go to sleep, the vexing thoughts came back again, and the young Christian grew more faint-hearted than ever.

"You quarrel more than any girl in the school, and say such spiteful things as Maggie or Bertha would never dream of uttering," a voice seemed to say. "You fancy you love your Saviour, and try to serve Him; and yet all the world can see that your heart is full of malice and hatred. You were glad that Evelyn could not come down to-night, because she lost the praise and admiration which you prize so highly. A strange sort of Christian you must be! How would you like your father and mother to see how you go on?"

This and much more the accusing spirit seemed to whisper in Hetty's ear. It was not the first time

by many that he had spoken such bitter things, but poor Hetty felt as if she could not bear them now. Deep down in her heart something seemed to say that there was an answer to all these charges if only she could find it; but, in her agitation and bewilderment, she could scarcely think at all, much less reason.

"You fancy you love your Saviour," again rang in her ears. "Now, don't you? Don't you?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied poor Hetty. "I knew He loved me, and I thought that some day I should love Him; and I believe I do, too, a very little, in spite of everything."

"And yet you quarrel with Evelyn," urged the voice again. "Very strange, truly."

"St. Paul loved Christ, and yet he quarrelled with Barnabas," thought Hetty. "I wonder whether he was more miserable about it than I am? He didn't seem to think he ought to leave off calling himself a servant of Christ because of that. Perhaps he thought he ought to serve Him all the more because of it, for surely the more sins Christ forgives, the more we ought to love Him. It says so in the Bible. 'To whomsoever much is forgiven, the same loveth much.' I daresay he made up his mind, though, that he wouldn't be provoked into saying sharp things again, and perhaps he

never did. Well, I'm not much like St. Paul, but I'll go on trying. I've the same Saviour to help me."

So, hiding herself under the shield of faith, Hetty resolved to prove no traitor from the ranks of the King's army.

CHAPTER XVII.

MOTIVES.

But wherefore should I fear?
Or from his presence flee,
It is his well-known voice I hear,
It is his eye I see.
What though He comes in night or storm,
Throned on dark waves I trace his form.

THE month of May was over, and June was far advanced, when one Saturday afternoon a letter was put into Hetty's hand in the handwriting of Florence, now Florence Dalton. The afternoon had been pronounced too hot for a walk, and the girls were scattered about the garden, seated under the most shady trees—some with books and others with needlework. Hetty was in her favourite spot under the large chestnut-tree; little Carrie, who had of late professed an enthusiastic devotion to her, was lying on the grass beside her, with her curly head resting in Hetty's lap; and Maggie and Ella were sitting at a little distance. Hetty held a book in her hand which, from its appearance, and from the interest which she seemed to take in its

contents, was evidently of a lighter description than she had often an opportunity of reading when at school.

"A letter!" exclaimed Ella; "you are fortunate, Hetty; you get such lots of letters, your friends must be very fond of letter-writing."

"Mamma is," replied Hetty; "but this is not from her, it is from Florence."

"Oh, do let's hear it then, at least if there are no secrets in it, Hetty," said Maggie, eagerly. "Where did she write from, they are away on their wedding-tour, aren't they?"

"Yes, the letter is from Paris; do you want to hear it all, it looks very stupid."

"Give us selections then, Hetty," said Ella; "is she in good spirits?"

"Extremely good, dragging her poor husband about every day sight-seeing; how he must hate it, but she says it does him good. Then there is a description of a quantity of jewels he has been giving her—she made him get them, she says; what a way to talk. And then, oh, listen, 'I nearly broke my heart at your refusal to be my bridesmaid. I was determined to have ten, and really it was so hard to think of anybody to take your place. If you had seen the dresses you would have been tempted, I'm sure. Then it was so disagreeable of your father and mother to decline to come;

of course I can understand that Mr. Brewster might be busy, but your mother might have come without him. Well, I shall make her acquaintance when I come to town; I shall look to you to give me a great deal of your company ;' and there is a great deal more about what we are to do together, very uninteresting," said Hetty, returning the letter to its envelope, and taking up her book again.

"You live almost next door to Mr. Dalton, don't you, Hetty?" said Ella. "I suppose you will see a great deal of Florence when you leave school, won't you?"

"I don't know," said Hetty, absently; "I suppose I shall see something of her, but she will be very gay, and we live very quietly."

"I shouldn't think she's much improved," said Maggie; "what do you imagine she married that old gentleman for, Hetty; she couldn't care for him, it's out of the question."

"I don't know," replied Hetty again; "she seems very happy."

"Hetty," said little Carrie, "it is so hot; look at those clouds, don't you think there'll be a storm?"

"Very likely, darling; are you afraid? Do you want to go in?"

"No, you'll take care of me, and if it comes we must run; but I shall watch the clouds, and when

the very first little streak of lightning comes I shall tell you."

"Do, pussy," said Hetty; then, after a moment's silence she continued, turning to Ella, "I suppose nobody can judge for other people; but I should have said Florence never could be happy with such a husband as Mr. Dalton."

"He's an invalid, isn't he?" said Ella. "Well, certainly I should never have thought that Florence had such a taste for nursing that she would like a sick husband, but perhaps she won't trouble her head about him; they keep a host of servants, don't they?"

"Yes, they've taken two men-servants with them, and a maid," replied Hetty; "well, I hope it will turn out better than can be expected. Here, Carrie, jump up, there is going to be a storm, I'm sure; and it is not very safe to be under a tree; let's go in."

"Hetty does not much like the idea of Mrs. Dalton being so near to her in town," remarked Maggie to Ella, as the young girl walked away with little Carrie dancing along by her side. "It will be a great pity, won't it, if they see much of each other again? she is quite a different girl without Florence."

"Yes," replied Ella; "but I think she will be rather shy of Florence in future. I asked her one

day what Mr. Brewster thought of Florence, and she said he didn't like her ; and you know Hetty worships her father."

"Yes, she does, and from what Miss Travers says about him and his kindness in that dreadful fever, I don't wonder. I should like to see him very much, Ella."

"Hetty is very like him, Miss Travers says. Oh, Maggie, how Evelyn does torment her."

"Yes, it's too bad ; you should try and put it down as you're the eldest now, Ella."

"I have tried once or twice," replied Ella ; "but Evelyn is so evidently used to having her own way, that the end of it generally is that she puts me down."

Maggie laughed, "If it wasn't for her, school would be very peaceable just now," she said. "There's thunder, Ella, shall we go in?"

"Perhaps we had better get up from under this tree," said Ella ; "but I like watching a storm ; we need not go in till it begins to rain. You're not afraid, I know, Maggie."

"No," replied Maggie, "I rather like the feeling a storm gives one—solemn and still I always feel, don't you?"

"Yes," said Ella ; "but it is coming on fast, that flash was very bright."

"And here comes the rain," added Maggie, as

a large drop fell upon her hand. "I'm sorry we must go in."

"It is going to be a tremendous storm," said Ella, as two girls ran toward the house. "Oh! what a flash."

"Who's that crying?" inquired Maggie, as she entered the school-room, and a faint sound of sobbing reached her ear. "Why, Carrie, surely you're not frightened at the lightning," she added, approaching the child who was shaking with terror, and hiding her face in Hetty's lap.

"Yes, I am, it's so bright," said the child, raising her face for a minute, but burying it again as another, but less vivid, flash lighted up the room.

Hetty stroked the soft wavy hair which lay in masses in her lap, saying, soothingly, "It will be over soon, darling; you need not look; shut your eyes, and then you won't see it."

"I think it's very pretty," remarked Maggie; "why don't you like to see it, Carrie?"

Carrie made no reply; but little Nellie answered, "Carrie is afraid that the lightning will set the house on fire, and we shall all be burnt up. But I'm not at all afraid, Maggie."

"That's a good thing," said Maggie.

While Hetty added, "Perhaps Carrie will be braver when she is as old as you, Nellie."

"Hardly likely, if you spoil and pet her so now,"

remarked Evelyn, looking up from a letter she was writing, with a scornful smile ; " you are doing your best to make her think it is a fine thing to be timid and nervous."

Hetty made no reply, and Ella was about to remark that there was nothing very strange in a nervous child of seven years being afraid of thunder and lightning, when a vivid flash seemed to dart through the room, followed instantly by such a rattling peal and such a strange rumbling sound ; then several of the girls shrieked, and even Evelyn, with all her boasted composure, turned pale as death.

" Hush, hush, darling, it's all over now," said Hetty, pressing poor frightened, sobbing Carrie in her arms ; " there won't be another like that, I daresay."

" Oh, but it made such a noise," said Carrie, shaking all over. " I wish you would shut the shutters and keep it out."

" Keep the thunder out, dear ! Why, you would hear that just as much with the shutters shut."

" Yes, but the lightning," said poor Carrie.

" It was frightful," said Miss Kirton, who till that minute had been reading quietly in one corner of the room, apparently quite undisturbed by the storm. " You need not look so contemptuously at little Carrie, your own face was white enough just now, Evelyn."

"Here's Miss Travers!" exclaimed some of the girls, as a footstep was heard on the stairs. "Oh, Miss Travers, did you ever hear such a clap as that last?"

"I don't think I ever did," replied Miss Travers; "it was just overhead. Poor Carrie! were you very frightened? Well, no wonder. Do you know what that rumble was? It was the old chimney at the other side of the house tumbling down, so you needn't be surprised that there was such a noise."

"The old chimney!" exclaimed several voices. "Oh, Miss Travers, was it struck by the lightning?"

"I don't know. I daresay it may have been. At any rate, the thunder seems to be growing more distant; that clap was much further off."

"But won't it come back again?" inquired Carrie, just venturing to uncover her face for a moment. "Perhaps all the house will come down next time."

Miss Travers smiled. "I hope not," she said. "What was that beautiful psalm you were saying to me this morning, Carrie? 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and fortress, my God, in Him will I trust.' God can take care of you, Carrie. In fact, He did care of you just now."

Carrie looked grave. She had no doubt it was

all quite true, and yet, just now, she liked to think that it was Hetty's protecting arms that were shielding her.

Something of this thought Miss Travers read in the earnest, loving gaze which the child fixed on her friend, and she said, "It is very kind of Hetty to sit nursing you all this hot afternoon; but I daresay she wants to be doing something else. Don't you think you can get off her lap now, and try to be as brave as Nellie."

Carrie looked alarmed, and chung so close to Hetty, that the latter smiled, and said, "Oh, it is too hot to do much this afternoon, Miss Travers. I don't mind having her a little longer, and the storm will be over soon, I daresay."

But the storm was not over soon; it seemed to pass away for some hours, only to return with increased fury when the night had closed; and little Carrie, who was a very delicate and nervous child, was almost out of her senses with terror. Earnestly she implored Hetty to let her sleep with her in her bed; but this Mrs. Travers would not allow. "Carrie's little bed should be carried into her room," she said; "but Hetty was not strong enough to have such a disturbed night, as Carrie's fears would be sure to occasion her, if they slept together."

"Well, I am surprised at Mrs. Travers," re-

marked Evelyn, as the girls were bidding each other good-night; "since Hetty has made Carrie so silly, I think she is the person who ought to suffer from her fancies."

"We seldom get our deserts, Evelyn," replied Hetty, gaily—"good-night;" and she went into her room and shut the door.

No one got much sleep that night, before sunrise. Then the sky began to clear, and the rumbling thunder gradually died away. The intense heat had vanished, and a soft breeze was blowing when the household met on Sunday morning. Carrie was not up; she had only just fallen asleep, and Mrs. Travers did not wish her to be disturbed till she woke.

"She will not be fit to go to church, I am afraid," she added; "so some one will have to stay at home with her. She almost screamed herself into a fit last night."

"May I stay, Mrs. Travers?" said Hetty, timidly. "I should like to."

"You, my dear! I meant one of the servants; but if you like you can stay, only don't let the child hinder you from reading or doing anything you like."

"I suppose Hetty wants to finish that novel she was reading yesterday," remarked Evelyn, when she and several of the other girls were waiting in

the school-room till it was time for their usual Bible-lesson with Miss Travers. Hetty was not in the room, nor either of the other governesses, for Mrs. Travers never wished her pupils to be constantly under the eye of their teachers, and Sunday was a day when they were left a good deal to themselves.

As no notice was taken of this speech, the other girls being intent on their books, Evelyn repeated the remark, adding, that "She knew a great many girls who spent the whole of Sunday in reading novels; they seemed to think it was all that Sunday was good for."

"A strange idea," said Bertha; "how tired they must be by the evening; but you are mistaken about Hetty, she is very particular what book she reads on Sunday."

Evelyn smiled; but it was not a kind smile, as she replied, "Oh, many people profess to be so, but she must have some motive for wishing so much to stay at home this morning."

"Her motive is plain enough," said Maggie, rather impatiently, "she is fond of little Carrie, and wants to please the child. Is there anything so very incomprehensible in that?"

"Not to those who try to impute the best motives they can to the actions of their friends, Maggie," observed Ella, drily; but, unfortunately, everybody has not the faculty of doing so."

Evelyn looked rather annoyed at this remark ; but she contented herself with replying, " Ah, you don't know so much about girls as I do. I've known girls who have such an unconquerable taste for novel reading that they constantly make excuses to avoid going to church, because they positively can't tear themselves away from their books ; yes, I've actually known them bring them to church with them, and read them during the prayers. You see, my father being a clergyman, I've seen so much of all kinds of society."

Ella and Maggie exchanged glances, and the latter remarked, laughing, " I'm extremely thankful my father wasn't a clergyman if that's the kind of society their daughters move in."

" Yes," added Ella, slowly, and with emphasis, " but I'm glad you've told us, Evelyn, what strange families you are acquainted with—it explains some things we could not understand."

Evelyn coloured, " What do you mean?" she said, almost indignantly.

" I mean your behaviour to Hetty," replied Ella, shortly.

Evelyn was quite taken by surprise, " I don't see what you mean at all," she said ; " what can my knowledge of other girls' ways have to do with my behaviour to Hetty?"

" A great deal," answered Ella, coldly ; and

Maggie added, "If, as you 'say, Evelyn, you have known girls who do such disgraceful things as you describe, it is very possible you may have grown suspicious ; but that Hetty has been brought up in a very different way from such young ladies is very evident ; and why you should imagine such things about her is more than I can explain."

"Perhaps I could ; but, perhaps I won't," said Bertha, laughing.

"Oh, do if you can by all means, Bertha," exclaimed Evelyn, colouring deeply ; "pray enlighten Maggie."

"No, I never satisfy people's curiosity. I will tell you any time you like in private ; it was a little remark that you made to me yourself one day that enables me to discover the secret of your dislike to Hetty ; but it was nothing to be proud of, and there is no reason all the world should hear it."

"As they would, if Ella and Maggie knew, you think," said Evelyn ; but just at this minute the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Hetty herself, who announced that Miss Travers was on her way to the school-room, and the girls were instantly on the alert to prepare for her.

It was with considerable difficulty that any of the four girls brought themselves to attend to the subject before them. Evelyn herself was greatly disturbed at the remarks to which she had been

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you did not seem to hear me, are you not well?"

"Yes, she was quite well," Evelyn said; then perceiving Bertha's eyes fixed upon her, she began to fear that she might have suspected the subject of her engrossing thoughts, and accordingly roused herself to reply to the question, when Miss Travers repeated it.

Evelyn's reflections throughout that day, were very far from pleasant. It was impossible to deceive herself into fancying that she had attained anything like the position in the school which she had anticipated, and which she still coveted. She was clever, but there were others of the girls who were equally so, and consequently the first place in all the classes was not as she had anticipated, always attainable; then to be loved and admired by her companions, seemed now by no means so much a matter of course, as her imagination had pictured it—in fact, she was not a favourite at all.

But to return to Hetty. Her Sunday morning passed very pleasantly away, for though, in spite of Evelyn's insinuation to the contrary, she would far rather have gone with her companions to church, yet there was so much that was delightful in Carrie's gratitude and enjoyment of her society, that Hetty soon ceased to regret her self denial.

"You are such a dear old thing," exclaimed

little Carrie, as she came dancing into the school-room a few minutes after the others had departed to church. "Now, I am going to be a sick lady, and lie on the sofa, and you are going to read to me."

"There's not much the matter with you, you little rogue," said Hetty, kissing her; "but what shall I read to you?"

"Let me think," replied the child; "there's Joseph, and Moses, and David and the Giant, and Naaman, and Daniel and Peter in prison, and Jonah; oh! I think I'll have Daniel and the lions. Naaman is for naughty people who tell stories, like Evelyn did yesterday."

"Why is it for naughty people," inquired Hetty, much surprised; "and what do you mean by saying Evelyn tells stories?"

"Because she does; she said yesterday that you spoilt me, and you don't, I'm sure; and, Hetty, you must know why it's for naughty people, because Gehazi told a story at the end of it all, and God made him a leper to punish him."

Hetty smiled at this explanation, and replied, "Well then, to-day we will read about Daniel; that will be a good story for you, because it will show you how brave people can be when they love God."

Carrie agreed, and listened eagerly to every word of that beautiful Bible story, and when Hetty had finished, remarked, "There's a story for every-

body in the Bible, isn't there Hetty? that's my story, and what's yours?"

"I don't know, exactly," replied Hetty. "I like all the Bible stories, Carrie; they all teach us something."

"Yes, but you are brave, you weren't afraid of the storm, so you needn't read about Daniel—that's the story for little cowards like me."

"Oh, Carrie!" said Hetty, earnestly, and hiding her face in the child's long hair, "we're all cowards, I'm a dreadful coward every day of my life."


"Are you, I don't think so; you didn't scream yesterday when that great big clap came and knocked the chimney down. I don't think you're a coward, Hetty."

"Ah, Carrie, you don't know, there are so many ways of being a coward; there are a great number of things that I'm just as much afraid of as you are of a storm."

"Are there?" said Carrie, with a very puzzled face, "what are they?"

"One thing is I'm very much afraid of telling people when they do wrong, and another is, I don't like to talk to people about the Saviour."

Carrie looked very thoughtful, "But you do," she said; "you told me on Friday that I had been naughty to Mademoiselle, and you persuaded me to go and tell her I was sorry."



"Yes, but you are a very little person, Carrie?" replied Hetty, laughing.

"Still I *am* a person. I'm somebody," urged Carrie, stretching her little body to its utmost length as she lay on the sofa; "and now, dear, darling Hetty, won't you play and sing some hymns to me? that hymn you used to sing when you were a little girl."

Hetty complied; her voice was not strong, but it was very sweet; and Carrie, who was very fond of music, thought it was most delightful. How long she would have kept Hetty singing, I can't say, had not the latter risen from the piano at last, saying, "That will do, Carrie; and now I think you'd better either lie still and go to sleep, or else try to learn a few verses to say to Mrs. Travers when she comes in. I want to begin my theme for Miss Travers."

Carrie made some objection to either plan, but Hetty was firm; and at last the child discovered that she was very sleepy, and would like a nap very much indeed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

There's blight for all beauty, all light has its shading,
All love knows its chastening, all joy blends with pain;
And the flowers that are fairest, while blooming are fading,
And the stars that are brightest, while beaming must wane.

H. F.

"WHY, what's the matter, Hetty? Have you had any bad news?" inquired Bertha, entering the school-room where Hetty was sitting alone one evening, with an open letter in her hand. It was about a week before the commencement of the Midsummer holidays, and all the girls were eagerly looking forward to their release from lessons. "There is nothing wrong at home, is there?"

"Oh, nothing so very bad," replied Hetty, trying to smile. "At least, I mean, it might have been much worse."

"Well, what is it?" inquired Bertha.

"Why, mamma writes to tell me that Aunt Emily is very ill again. You know I told you about Aunt Emily, mamma's youngest sister. She is

always an invalid, but sometimes she gets frightfully ill, and they think she will never be well again; and she's got one of her attacks now, and mamma is obliged to go to her. So she'll be away a good part of my holidays. Isn't it tiresome?"

"Very. I thought, perhaps, you were going to stay with your aunt too. Is your mother going alone?"

"Yes, she is going at once; but they have settled that Fred, my brother, who is at Rugby, is to go to be with her when his holidays begin. Fred is a great favourite with my uncle, and, as there is plenty of fishing about there, he will be perfectly happy. But it will be horridly dull, with mamma and Freddy away."

"But your father and your sisters will be at home, Hetty."

"Of course. But papa is out all day, and Gracie is so little, she is no companion for me. Oh, Bertha, would you mind coming to spend part of the holidays with me? Mamma says I may ask one of the girls, if I like, to keep me company. It will be frightfully dull for you, I'm afraid, but it would be delightful for me."

"I should like it above all things," replied Bertha, heartily; "but I don't know whether I can. When would you like to have me?"

"Oh, whenever you like; at once, if you can."

"Oh, Bertha, do say you will. I will try all I can to make you comfortable."

Bertha laughed. "I hope I am not so very hard to entertain as you seem to imagine, Hetty," she said. "But let me see. I'll tell you exactly what's the difficulty. You know, my father has been abroad all the winter, and he, mamma, and my sister are coming home through Switzerland; and as they don't seem disposed to hurry themselves on my account, they didn't expect to reach home till nearly the end of August."

"Then you can come and stay with me till then," said Hetty, brightening up. "Why, Bertha, what's to hinder you? You don't care to be at home by yourself, do you?"

"No, by no means, and it isn't considered proper that I should be; and I believe mamma has written to an elderly cousin of ours, whom I particularly dislike, to ask her if she can have me to stay with her for three or four weeks. Now, if she consents, I don't see how I can avoid going there. Do you?"

"Can't you write and say that, as you didn't know whether it would be convenient to her to have you, you had charitably promised to keep me company in my loneliness?" suggested Hetty.

"I'm afraid to do that till I hear from her," said Bertha, "though I should very much prefer

accepting your invitation, Hetty. I think I'll write to mamma about it this very night. I'm sure she'll get me out of the scrape somehow, if I ask her."

"Oh, do," said Hetty. "And hadn't you better get Mrs. Travers to write a few lines at the same time, to certify that I'm a safe person for you to be with, or your mother may be afraid to trust you with me?"

"I think she'll trust me without that," replied Bertha, laughing. "I'm such a steady young woman that she generally confides in my discretion. Shall I write to-night? There will be scarcely any time to spare. It is two days' post both ways."

"Yes, do, by all means. Set about it at once. Where is your desk?"

"In my cupboard. I think, Hetty, I'll go and tell Mrs. Travers all about it. It might be as well to be able to say that she thinks I can get nothing but good from a visit to Mr. Brewster's house. Don't you think so?"

"Decidedly; but I think papa would say he should be sorry to be made so responsible for your conduct," replied Hetty. "You might be guilty of a good deal of mischief, and he'd never find it out."

"Might I. Well, I think I can get Mrs. Travers to say that, so I'll go and try."

Bertha disappeared, but returned much more

speedily than Hetty had expected with such a glowing face, that her friend was at a loss to account for it.

"Good news!" she exclaimed. "Guess what it is, Hetty. I am so glad I went to Mrs. Travers before I wrote to mamma. I can't think why she didn't tell me about it sooner."

"About what, Bertha? Do tell me, I'm half wild with curiosity."

"Why, my dear cousin has saved me the trouble of running the risk of offending her by declining to have me; she says she is quite unequal to the care of girls with such outrageous spirits as I have," said Bertha, with a merry laugh; "and she has written to Mrs. Travers to ask if it would be inconvenient to her to keep me here till my parents return."

"All by yourself. Oh, Bertha, what a shame!"

"It would be much more lively than with Cousin Maria, I assure you," replied Bertha; "but if you will have me, I need do neither now."

"That is delightful," exclaimed Hetty. "But what did Mrs. Travers say to your going home with me?"

"She said she was sure my mother could have no objection," said Bertha, "and Miss Travers said she was sure I should enjoy myself; but I am going to write to mamma to-night about it."

“But you are sure she will make no objection, aren’t you? I am so glad. I was afraid that when I was all alone with the children, I should find it impossible to keep away from Florence. Bertha, be sure to ask your mother to write by return of post.”

Bertha promised—the letter was written and despatched; but as it was impossible for an answer to arrive before the day before the holidays, the two girls had need for all their patience during the delay. However, the time passed, and the answer came at last. Mrs. Wood was quite willing that her daughter should accept Hetty’s invitation, and Bertha was therefore perfectly happy.

Hetty was quite amused at her excitement; she had no idea that it could give any one so much pleasure to come and stay with her, and she felt greatly flattered in consequence. To her fears that Bertha would find her visit extremely dull, and that she would very soon wish herself at school, Bertha returned vehement assurances that she expected to enjoy herself immensely; she had never stayed in London in her life before, and that she should not mind the heat in the least.

Her boisterous spirits, however, subsided in some degree as they approached their journey’s end, and she listened to Hetty, wondering whether her papa would send any one to meet them, and

how they should manage to get a cab if he did not, as if she was in a dream. She felt a considerable dread of Mr. Brewster, whom she had never seen and was a good deal relieved to find that Hetty did not in the least expect that he would come to meet them himself.

"I wish you would tell me what your papa and sisters are like, Hetty," she said, rousing herself when they were comfortably ensconced in the brougham which the doctor had sent to fetch them from the station. "I saw your mamma last November, you know, when she came to see you on your birthday; but I haven't the faintest idea what your papa is like."

"He is tall," said Hetty, "and rather broad, not stout, you know; but broad across the shoulders. Then his hair is just turning a little grey; he is not at all old, just what people call middle-aged, I suppose. You will like him, I know, after a little while; he looks very grave, and I used to be very much afraid of him, but I'm not so much now."

"And your sisters, Hetty, what are they like?"

"They are much younger than I am, quite children, you know. Mamma lost two little boys who were born between Fred and Gracie. Gracie is only nine, she is very pretty, just like mamma, and a very dear little thing; Laura and Kate are nice little things too, they are seven and four. They

are all having holidays now, so I am afraid they'll be rather troublesome."

"Does your mamma teach them when she's at home?" inquired Bertha.

"Oh, no, they have a daily governess, Miss Rye, who taught me before I came to school, but they have the same holidays as Freddy and I have. Mamma gives them their Bible lesson, and she says that she wants me to hear them their chapter every morning while she is away. I wonder how I shall get on with them. Look here, Bertha, that's Mr. Dalton's house, and this is ours; now will you jump out? Oh! here come the children."

Bertha felt very strange and almost shy as she stood by and watched the three little girls springing around their sister with the most noisy demonstrations of welcome. She was beginning to think that it must be very nice to have younger sisters to love and admire one as Hetty's sisters did, when her friend suddenly remembering her, unclasped Katie's little arms from her neck, saying, "Here, Gracie, Laura, come and speak to Miss Wood, we are all forgetting we have got a visitor."

"Let's go into the dining-room, Hetty," said Gracie, "our dinner is all ready, but papa said you would have dinner with him now."

"Well, we shall want some lunch, at any rate," replied Hetty; "Bertha, will you come upstairs and

take your things off? What time will papa be in, Gracie?"

"He said perhaps he'd be in to lunch," replied Gracie. "Hetty, I made the tea at breakfast this morning."

"Did you; how grand," said Hetty, kissing her little sister. "Now, will you take Miss Wood to her room, and help her to take her things off; Laura and Katie can come with me."

Bertha followed her little guide up two flights of stairs to a room which looked out over the square garden. It was prettily furnished, and when Gracie volunteered the information that sometimes dear Ada used to sleep there, it was doubly interesting in Bertha's eyes.

"When you are ready we can go down to dinner," remarked Gracie, after having given various scraps of intelligence which she never doubted were extremely interesting to her visitor. "I saw papa's carriage drive up just now, and he is sometimes in a great bustle for his lunch."

"I am quite ready now," said Bertha; "we must not keep your papa waiting. Now for the introduction," she thought to herself. "I hope this good doctor is not very formidable."

Mr. Brewster was in the dining-room when she entered; and so was Hetty: the latter had forgotten her friend when she rushed downstairs to meet her

father ; but Bertha thought this quite natural, and was soon perfectly at her ease with the whole family.

“ Gracie will be jealous of you, Hetty,” remarked her father, when the first greetings were over, she has been my little housekeeper for the last two or three days ; we have got on famously together, haven’t we, Gracie ?”

“ Yes, but Hetty will be able to pour out the tea without standing up,” replied Gracie ; “ and I shall be able to sit in my usual place, papa.”

“ That will be an advantage certainly, and you will have more time to eat your breakfast, when you are no longer oppressed with the cares of house-keeping. I don’t expect Hetty will ask me three questions about each cup of tea she gives me ; will you, Hetty ?”

“ No, papa, I should think not ; why ?”

“ Because after carefully bringing me my first cup of tea, Gracie returns to her place and watches me till I have stirred it up and tasted it, then she inquires, ‘ Is your tea nice, papa ?’ to which I reply, ‘ Very nice, Gracie ;’ and Gracie, greatly relieved, ventures to pour some out for herself ; then she again looks anxiously at me, and inquires, timidly, ‘ Did I put enough sugar, papa ?’ to which question I also reply, ‘ Quite enough, thank you, Gracie ;’ and my little girl then begins her own breakfast. But in less than five minutes another reflection troubles

her, and once more she asks, 'Are you sure there is milk enough, papa?' these are Gracie's three questions, Hetty; so I think you will agree with me that housekeeping cares have weighed rather heavily on these little shoulders."

Hetty and Bertha laughed; but Gracie blushed very deeply, as she replied, "I am afraid I worried you, papa."

"Not at all, Gracie, you only amused me, my child; did you think that if I had wanted more milk or sugar I should have been afraid to ask for it?"

"No, of course not, papa; but I was so afraid I mightn't have made it nice."

"Quite needless fears, Gracie, you succeeded perfectly; but now what are you young ladies going to do this afternoon?"

"Oh, papa, it is so hot; I think we will stay at home and rest, at least, if Bertha likes," Hetty replied.

Bertha liked anything that was proposed, and the doctor soon after left the room, saying that the next day they must try and make some plans for amusing their visitor.

"We'll go and sit in the drawing-room," said Hetty. "Burns, if anybody calls, mind you tell them mamma's out, and don't say anything about me being at home. I hate callers, don't you, Bertha? Now, you are going to put yourself in that easy-chair

by the window, and I'll have this one, and we're going to enjoy ourselves."

"Wait a minute," said Bertha, "I must go and get some work, I can't sit here with my hands before me the whole afternoon. I shan't be a minute."

"Well, I'll fetch my tatting too," replied Hetty, "but I don't expect I shall do any; it's much too hot to work."

The afternoon passed away very rapidly, beguiled by pleasant chat concerning their respective homes and the schoolfellows from whom they had just parted, mingled with some of those speculations about the future in which we are all apt to indulge.

Suddenly a loud knock at the front door made Hetty utter an exclamation and fly to the window. "It's a carriage—the Daltons' liveries, I believe. Oh, Bertha! I believe it's Florence herself; what shall we do?"

"Do—oh! perhaps she won't come in as your mamma is not at home, and even if she does, we shall get on with her somehow, I suppose."

"She has come in," replied Hetty, "I hear somebody coming upstairs. Oh, Florence! how do you do? did you come to see Bertha and me? mamma is away from home."

"Yes, I know; but I saw you drive past this morning, and having allowed you plenty of time to

rest, I thought I would come and hear all the school news. How are you getting on? You look very well."

"I'm quite well, thank you; how are you, Florence, and how is Mr. Dalton?"

"Oh, he's quite well—that is, as well as he ever is or can expect to be while he takes such a quantity of medicine," replied Florence, indifferently. "But, Hetty, I came to ask you to go with me to the Royal Academy to-morrow, you know it closes this week, so you have no time to lose."

"Does it," said Hetty; "how hot it will be there. Do you care to go, Bertha?"

"Yes, I should like it extremely," replied Bertha; "I always have wanted to go to the Royal Academy. Don't you like picture-galleries, Hetty?"

"Sometimes," answered Hetty; "but I was thinking, Florence, that though it is very kind of you to ask us, I shouldn't be at all surprised if papa had planned to take us himself, in which case, of course, it wouldn't do to disappoint him. It is very kind of you, but——"

"Nonsense," interrupted Florence, looking very much annoyed; "it's not at all kind of me. I asked you simply for my own pleasure. I've been longing for you to come home, Hetty. You must know I am terribly moped sometimes, and want companions of my own age. Come, say you'll let

me call for you to-morrow afternoon, and don't be absurd."

Hetty hesitated. "I will ask papa," she said, at length, "and send you word to-night. Will that do, Florence?"

"Yes; only mind, I won't take a refusal. I told your mamma I should come and see you a great deal, and I mean to keep my word. Now, what are you looking so disagreeable about, Hetty? You don't know how you are disfiguring your pretty face."

"Am I?" said Hetty, laughing. "Well, never mind; tell me how long you've been in town, and how you enjoyed your trip."

"Tolerably," said Florence, looking round the room in an uneasy manner. "My dear, what time does your papa come home?"

"About six, generally; but he is not very regular. What's the matter, Florence?"

"It's nearly six now. I promised to drive in the Park with Mr. Dalton for an hour before dinner," replied Florence, rising hastily; "I'd forgotten, and he's waiting in the carriage all this while. Good-bye, Hetty, good-bye, Bertha. I shall call for you at half-past two to-morrow."

She hurried away, leaving the girls gazing at each other in astonishment.

"She said she had come for a talk, and vanished

without asking after a single creature," exclaimed Bertha; while Hetty remarked—

"How odd she did look! so uneasy and uncomfortable. Didn't you think so?"

"Yes, very strange. I think she was afraid of Mr. Brewster coming in," replied Bertha. "Doesn't she like him, Hetty, or doesn't he like her?"

"I don't think papa cares for me to see much of her," said Hetty, "and perhaps Florence has found that out. I wonder what he will say to our going with her to-morrow. I would much rather go with him."

Bertha was sitting alone in the dining-room of Mr. Brewster's house, after breakfast, the next morning, busy with a long letter which she was writing to her sister, full of expressions of delight that she had escaped the misery of a visit of three weeks to Cousin Maria, and anticipations of enjoyment in her present circumstances, when Hetty entered the room with a very bright face, exclaiming—

"It's all settled; we are going to the Academy with papa, Bertha. Aren't you glad?"

"Yes, very; but how have you managed about Mrs. Dalton, Hetty; what will she say?"

"I don't know. I told papa that I ought to have sent a message to her last night, but that I forgot to speak to him at dinner-time, and, as he was out all the evening I couldn't, and he said he

was going to No. 6 this morning, and he would speak to Florence about it. That takes it all out of my hands. I'm so glad."

"Yes, it's a very good thing. Your papa did not wish you to go with her then, I suppose?"

"No, I don't think he did. He looked rather vexed when he heard she had been here so soon; you know, Bertha, papa does not wish me to be very much with her, though, of course, I must be polite; it is rather awkward, isn't it?"

"Very, I should think," said Bertha, looking thoughtful, and then both the girls remained silent till Hetty said, she must go and hear the children read their chapter, and left the room again.

"It must be very difficult for Hetty to keep out of Florence's way when they live so near together, and yet I am sure the doctor is quite right, and shows his good sense in not allowing them to be much together. Hetty was quite a different sort of girl when they were such friends at school, and no doubt if they became as intimate again, Florence would soon make her as worldly as she is herself; there is something so fascinating in Florence I wonder what it is, I never can make out. Well, never mind Florence, I must go on with my letter. Chrissie will envy me when I tell her I'm going to see the Royal Academy to-morrow; I think I'll keep my letter open till I've been, that I may tell

her all about it. What a number of things I am to see! Let me see, Hetty said I must go to the South Kensington Museum—I wonder where that is; and Gracie proposed the Zoological Gardens; and Mr. Brewster mentioned such a list of things I can't remember half. I know he said the Houses of Parliament and the Thames Embankment. I don't think I should care much for that; I suppose it's a kind of great dyke such as they have in Holland to prevent the sea running over the land. I wonder whether the Thames had a habit of flooding the streets, I never heard that it did; but somehow in the country one hears nothing. I felt a perfect ignoramus when Hetty and her father were talking this morning of things I never heard of. I wonder whether the doctor thought I looked very stupid. He looks rather a quiz. I daresay he was making fun of me to himself all breakfast time."

Nothing of the sort, Bertha; your round, good-tempered face has taken Mr. Brewster's fancy wonderfully, so much so, that perhaps it is quite as well you are not likely to see the letter which he scratched off to his wife in his study, in which he enters more fully than is his wont into a description of Hetty's new friend.

It was a relief to both the girls that, owing to the doctor's intervention, they saw nothing of Florence that afternoon. "If she is so dull, she'll

probably come to call, at all events," said Hetty, apprehensively; "do you think it's too hot for us to go for a walk with nurse and the children this afternoon, Bertha? then we should be out if she did come."

Bertha was quite ready; she wanted to see something of London, and did not mind the heat in the least, so in walking, and doing a little shopping, the time till dinner-time was passed away.

"It is very tiresome that papa is so busy just now," exclaimed Hetty, as she overheard Mr. Brewster giving orders that the brougham should be ready in a quarter of an hour, as the two girls left the dining-room after dinner. "I can't see why he need go out in the evening; I was in hopes he would be able to come and read to us a little while, and now, I suppose, there's no chance."

"I suppose there is somebody very ill," replied Bertha, who, unaccustomed to the habits of a doctor's household, thought his going out in the evening was a sure sign that he had a patient in a dangerous illness, and was already picturing to herself the sick-room, and anxious watchers, all eagerly expecting the doctor's arrival. "I think it must be rather nice to be a doctor, at least it would be if you could always make people well."

"But that's such a very small part of a doctor's business," Hetty said, laughing. "Of course there

are lots of people who send for papa who never can get well, and he knows it directly he sees them. I often think, if I were he, I should refuse to have anything to do with them, and advise them to send for another doctor; it must be so dreadful to keep on going to see people when you know you can do them no good."

"But though he mayn't be able to cure them, he may do them some good," suggested Bertha.

"Yes, a little of course; but the worst kind of patients must be those who haven't really anything the matter with them, but fancy they have. Papa had a patient once who wouldn't get up; nothing would induce her to. I don't know how long she went on like that, but at last one day, without the least apparent reason, she changed her mind and got up, and from that time forth has behaved like a rational creature. Now, don't you think such people as that must be exasperating?"

Bertha laughed. "Very, but rather amusing too," she replied. "But, Hetty, don't you think it must be very nice for your papa to see people get well?"

"Yes, when they've been very ill, because then he knows he's been of some use; but of course a great many of his patients are only *not quite* well, and, if they could only believe it, would get well without any medicine just as well as with it."

"Oh, Hetty, how can you tell that?"

"Why, because he wouldn't think of dosing us with medicine every time we sneezed, or coughed, or had a headache; in fact, I'm sure he does not care about giving us medicine at all. But such people as Mr. and Miss Dalton think it is impossible they can get well unless they take something, and papa often says the mind acts upon the body, and the body acts upon the mind."

"Then homœopathy must be very good for such people as that," suggested Bertha. "I mean the mild form of homœopathy, globules and so forth. Why doesn't your papa advise Mr. Dalton to try homœopathy; he would enjoy the pleasure of fancying he was taking medicine, if that's all he wants."

Hetty laughed. "Suppose you advise papa to try that plan," she said. "Oh, who can this be? There was a knock, and I hear somebody coming upstairs."

"Mr. Dalton," said the footman, throwing open the drawing-room door to admit a gentleman, whom Bertha saw at a glance could not be Florence's husband, though he looked much older than she imagined any of her step-sons could be. Hetty, too, looked surprised and not particularly pleased, for, though she had known Frank Dalton ever since she could remember, he was not a great favourite

of hers ; and as he had been a good deal away from home lately, they had seen very little of each other for some time. Rowland and Charlie had been her playfellows when she was a child ; but even then Frank was old and grave for his years, and she had always regarded him with feelings very much akin to positive dislike.

"He must want papa," she thought to herself as she shook hands with him, and introduced him to her friend. "How stupid of Burns to show him up here."

"Your father is out, I understand," Frank began in a deliberate way, which was natural to him and which Hetty peculiarly disliked ; "but Burns told me he thought he would be in soon. I wanted to see him particularly to-night, so I thought I would wait."

"I don't think he will be long," Hetty replied ; and then there was a dead silence, which neither the visitor nor the hostess seemed inclined to break for so long, that Bertha was beginning to think what remark she could make, and feeling strongly inclined to laugh ; when Frank brought his eyes down from the ceiling, on which he had been gazing so intently that Hetty had begun wondering whether there were any cobwebs there, and, fixing them on Hetty, observed, "It is a long time since I had the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Brewster."

"A very long time," Hetty replied. And then there was another pause, during which she wondered why Frank did not call her by her Christian name, as he had done all his life; and came to the conclusion that it was because she was no longer a child—though, in truth, she was feeling just then extremely childish, awkward, and shy. She had often heard it said that Frank Dalton had an aversion to chit-chat and ordinary small-talk; so that every remark she could devise about the weather, the summer amusements, and, in fact, everything in which she felt an interest, she feared he might despise and think ridiculous.

"But I must say something," she thought. "What will papa say, if he comes in and finds us sitting in perfect silence?"

Then, in desperation, plunging into the first subject she could think of, she inquired, "Whether his father was thinking of returning to Westhayes shortly?"

"I really cannot say. Mrs. Dalton seems to prefer town, so probably they will stay here some time longer. Mrs. Dalton is a friend of yours, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Hetty; "she was a school-fellow of ours. I hope you like her?"

"I have a very slight acquaintance with Mrs. Dalton," replied Frank, in his coldest and stiffest

manner. "Her tastes and mine do not lie in the same direction. I don't suppose we have a sentiment in common."

"No, I should think not," replied Hetty.

While Bertha added, suppressing with great difficulty an inclination to laugh, "I think, though she was rather wild, we all rather liked her at school. She is so merry and amusing, Mr. Dalton."

"Merry! yes; but it is the merriment of a heart ill at ease," replied Frank. "Amusing! yes, possibly; but, Miss Wood, there is a time for all things — 'A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.'"

"Certainly," said Bertha; "and perhaps poor Florence does not always show sufficient tact in timing her merriment. But she is young, Mr. Dalton, and time will mend that failing."

"Time present is the only time we can safely count upon. The future, about which we are too apt to speculate, may never come. Mrs. Dalton's father is learning this bitterly; and I fear she, too, is laying up trial for herself."

"Is Mr. Benson ill, or dying?" inquired Hetty, eagerly. "She said nothing about it yesterday."

"You have not heard of it? I thought your father would have told you. Mr. Benson has failed. He has been speculating enormously, and he is now reaping the fruits of his imprudence."

"Poor Florence!" exclaimed Hetty. "How terribly she must feel it, and her brothers too, brought up as they have been."

Frank Dalton made no reply, and Bertha, who was scanning his face unperceived by him, fancied she could discover a glance of something very much like satisfaction.

"Odious man!" she thought. "He is rejoicing in the ruin of those whom he despises, instead of pitying them and sympathizing with them, as he would if they were Christians; when, if he thinks at all, he must know how much more they are to be pitied, since they have no refuge to flee to in time of trouble."

"You are agreeing with me, Miss Wood," said Frank Dalton, catching her eye, and fancying he could read the meaning of her look, "that this catastrophe, instead of leading us merely to utter a few unmeaning words of sympathy, should be a warning to us how we set our hearts on the uncertain joys of this world, which may vanish at any time. You agree with me that that is the right way to look at this event?"

"I'm afraid I do not," replied Bertha, flushing at this sudden appeal to her. "I was not at that moment thinking of the lesson it might teach us; I was regretting that my manner to Florence yesterday was not as warm as it would have been had

I had the least idea of what had happened ; if she thought I knew, she must have thought me perfectly unfeeling, and I am sure I *am* very sorry for her."

Frank Dalton looked impatient, and was about to speak when Bertha continued, forgetting her shyness in her earnestness to say what was in her mind, " Surely, in such troubles as these, we, if we are Christians at all, have a splendid opportunity of behaving like Christians. I'm sure I shouldn't think much of those who talk about Christ's love and sympathy, but never show any love and sympathy themselves, should you ? Don't you think, too, that Christian people ought to have more of such sympathy to dispense than other people ; their hearts ought to be more full of love, and they surely ought to take the trouble to show it."

Frank Dalton looked astonished, " I scarcely think Mrs. Dalton would care for your sympathy," he said, coldly.

" Perhaps not, but we cannot tell till we try. I did not mean merely sympathy expressed in words," Bertha was continuing, when the door opened, and Mr. Brewster appeared, saying,

" Well, Frank, how do you do ; sorry you've been kept waiting. Is anything wrong at No. 6 ?"

" No, nothing ; I merely came to speak to you about that poor fellow you've been so kindly visiting

for me in Eagle Street. I wanted to know what you thought of him."

"That young glazier—he is better, decidedly better."

"I thought so; but will he ever be fit for work again, that's what I want to know?"

"Oh, no! not a bit of it; it is only a temporary rally. Last week he seemed going very fast, but now he is up again and dressed; he may linger some weeks, even months yet."

"It is hardly to be wished under the circumstances," said Frank Dalton; "no one to look after him but that deaf old woman, who can't hear a word he says, and no chance of getting about again, he can hardly wish to live."

"He does not wish to live," replied the doctor; "he is strongly tempted to wish to die, but he believes that in the matter of living and dying, as in everything else, perfect acquiescence in God's will is the happiest condition to be in."

Frank was silent for a minute, at last he said, "And, meanwhile, how is he to live? he is on no club, and all his savings have been exhausted."

"He seems to me a thoroughly fit object for charity," replied the doctor, "though I believe it is extremely painful to him to accept it."

"Doubtless; but who is to bestow alms on all

the fit objects for charity in London?" inquired Frank, rather haughtily.

"Those who have the means and the heart to do it," was the quiet answer.

"In other words, you mean me, Mr. Brewster," replied the young man; "but you have no idea how many demands I have continually."

"I have no wish to know," said the doctor. "I have a very strong opinion that one's charitable works should be entirely secret; but I feel pretty sure that if you and I do what we can honestly afford to do, this poor fellow will not starve."

"Well, we must see." He rose to take leave, saying, "I hear you are going to the Academy to-morrow; I hope you'll not have such a hot day as this has been. Somehow I never can find time to go to such places."

"Insufferable man!" exclaimed Hetty, as the door closed behind him; "what nonsense it is about his not being able to afford to let that poor man have all he wants. I don't believe he'd deny himself a new horse if he wanted one; do you think he would, papa?" she inquired, as he returned to the drawing-room.

"Would do what, Hetty? Who are you speaking of?"

"Frank Dalton, papa; isn't it absurd of him to pretend he can't afford to help that poor man?"

Mr. Brewster smiled. "He has helped him a good deal, Hetty," he replied; "but neither you nor I know much about Frank's affairs, so we won't trouble our heads about them. But I wanted to speak to you about something our vicar told me to-day, Hetty; he says Mrs. Marriot has asked you to take a class in the Sunday school next Sunday, and that you agreed to do so, is this the case?"

"Yes, papa; I told her I didn't in the least know how to set about it, but she said it was quite easy, so I said I would try. I am to be at the school punctually at half-past nine."

"Supposing your father does not object, Hetty, I suppose."

"Oh, papa, you can't object; why, I know mamma wishes me to teach in the Sunday school, so I never dreamt of your objecting."

"And you will be grievously disappointed if I say I do object, Hetty?"

"Yes, papa; Mrs. Marriot will think me so absurd to accept, and then decline," replied Hetty, almost sullenly.

"If she thinks anybody absurd it will be me, Hetty, inasmuch as I declined for you," said her father, gravely.

Hetty looked up quickly, a sudden flush of indignation dyeing her face, but the flush vanished,

and her eyes fell beneath her father's glance; she took up her tatting again, and made no further remark till, when the tea had been served and taken away, the doctor read prayers, and departed to his study, desiring the girls not to sit up late. Then her vexation broke forth: "Why was it that when she tried to be of some use in the world she was always hindered and discouraged; why did her father pretend one day that he wanted her to take an interest in the poor, and the next do all he could to keep her from doing anything for them; and why could he not let her settle her own affairs instead of treating her like a baby, and making Mrs. Marriot think she could not do as she liked." Bertha listened, and knew not what to say; one thing she was sure of, that Mr. Brewster did not mean to do anything unkind; probably he had a reason for not wishing Hetty to teach just now, and she advised Hetty to ask him about it the next day.

"Oh, no, there's no use in that," Hetty replied; "when once papa has made up his mind, he never changes it. I shan't say any more about the matter; but it is most unjust and unkind. I am sure mamma will be vexed when she hears it, she is so anxious I should get interested in Sunday school work."

"Perhaps your papa is afraid of your catching some fever; I know some people are terribly afraid

of their daughters going to Sunday schools on that account," suggested Bertha.

"No, it isn't that," said Hetty. "I know he isn't afraid of that; for a lady asked him once whether he thought it safe for her daughter to go to the Sunday school, and he said that if we believed that Sunday-school teachers were performing a duty, and doing a work for God, he thought we had a right to hope that His sheltering arm would be over them, and for his part, he should never hesitate on that score."

Bertha looked thoughtful. "I'm sure he has some reason, if you'd only ask him, Hetty," she said. "I wish you would."

Hetty shook her head, and Bertha, seeing it was of no use, forbore to press the subject.

CHAPTER XIX.

SUNDAY IN LONDON.

Sweet are all things when we learn to prize them,
Not for their sake but His who grants them or denies them.

AUBREY DE VERE.

"I HAD no idea that a Sunday in London could be so quiet," said Bertha to herself, as she sat at the drawing-room window, looking over the square garden and listening to the many church bells which were ringing near at hand. She had a book in her lap ; but Bertha was fond of thinking. Many people thought that she wasted a good deal of time in that way, but I am inclined to be of the opinion that they were mistaken, and to think that time spent in reflection is seldom wasted. Bertha was waiting for Hetty's summons to get ready for church ; she had been spending the last half hour alone, for her friend was reading to her little sisters in the dining-room, and the doctor had gone out ; but it was very pleasant to be alone enjoying, as Bertha was, the hush of the great city, and picturing to herself the many congregations which

would shortly be gathered, lifting to God the same prayer and the same psalm of praise. She forgot, or perhaps in her happy ignorance of the wickedness of London, she did not know, how many would still remain outside, wilfully "going astray like lost sheep;" she thought only of the great cry going up to heaven, "O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us;" of the solemn hymn, "We praise Thee, O Lord, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord," and her heart swelled with thankful joy that in that prayer and song she could lift up both heart and voice to Him who is glorified by the audible expression of the heart's devotion.

"I wish Sunday came oftener than once a week," she exclaimed, when Hetty coming to call her, said,

"I would give something to know what you are thinking about, Bertha, you look so intensely happy. Oftener than once a week, why?"

"Because one day in seven seems so little to give to the service of God," replied Bertha; "don't you think so?"

"But surely every day ought to be given to His service, and it must, if, as papa said this morning, all the powers of our mind and body are consecrated to Him; but, Bertha, we must get ready, I've something to tell you as we walk to church—that is to

say, if papa does not go with us ; but I half think he will."

She was right. Mr. Brewster was waiting for them in the hall when they came down, and walked with them to church, so that her tidings could not be told, and as it was evening before they were left alone again, Bertha had almost forgotten to claim her friend's promise, till Hetty again alluded to it.

But when the evening service was over, and Gracie had been dismissed to bed, Hetty came and leaned over Bertha's chair, saying, "I have found out about the Sunday school ; do you want to know ?"

"Oh, yes, Hetty, do tell me ; how did you find out ?"

"Papa asked me last night whether I was more resigned to my lot ?" said Hetty, laughing. "I couldn't think what he meant at first, but when he said 'about the Sunday school,' I didn't know what to say, because really I was very frightened at the idea of going, and rather glad to get off it, so I only said I wished he would tell me why he objected to my going."

"And what did he say, that is just what I wanted to know ?" said Bertha, eagerly.

"He said that just now I was at home in mamma's place, and that she wished me to do her work, and not somebody else's ; so then I remem-

bered that if I did not look after the children they would quite forget it was Sunday, and begin grand romps; for, you know, nurse has a fancy to go to a church a long way off, where she went when she was a girl, and she has to start directly after breakfast. Mamma always reads to them, and hears them say hymns till church time, and papa said if I did that I should be making myself quite as useful as if I went to the Sunday school."

"Then he will let you teach when you come home for good, won't he? it is only just now that he objects to your doing so," inquired Bertha.

"Yes," he said he should be very glad for me to have a class when I came home at Christmas, if I really wished it; but he thought if I began it without a right motive, and merely because other people said it was the proper thing to do, I should be sure to get tired of it before long, and he should be very sorry if that was the case. He seemed to think it such a very serious matter. Bertha, I don't think Mrs. Marriot did, do you?"

"No, she spoke as if it was very easy; but I don't think it can be, at least not for us who have never done any teaching at all in our lives; but you will get a little used to it now from teaching your sisters."

"Yes, papa said so; but, Bertha, what do you think he meant by a right motive?"

Bertha hesitated, "I should think," she said, "that we ought to have no other motive for wishing to become teachers, than the desire of letting poor ignorant children know about the love of Christ. I think some girls begin to teach because all their friends do, and they think it will be amusing, and others do it because they like to be thought hard-working, charitable people; but I should think, as your papa says, they must soon get tired of it."

"I told papa," said Hetty, "that I wanted to do some good, to be of some use in the world; and he said he knew I did, but that a great many people in their anxiety to do some definite work for God, were in danger of forgetting the little opportunities of serving Him that constantly occur in daily life; he reminded me of that beautiful hymn of Miss Waring's, 'Father, I know that all my life.' Oh, how funny, you have your book open at that page."

"Yes," said Bertha, "and I was just thinking of this line, 'Content to fill a little space, if Thou be glorified.' I suppose it's much easier to make an exertion and do something which seems to us very important, once in a way, than to do all the little trifling duties thoroughly well every day, don't you think so? because when we've done what we think a great thing, people notice it, and say they wonder how we could ever have courage to do it, and that makes us feel as if we'd been quite heroic, while

nobody notices at all the little things which are really much more troublesome."

"And yet they would soon notice if they weren't done," said Hetty, laughing, "I should soon hear of it, if I forgot to tell cook what time we would have dinner, or let papa's shirts go without buttons for a week. Oh, that reminds me," she continued, looking very much aghast, "that I never told papa what Mrs. Reade said, as we came out of church, about wishing he would go and see her daughter's baby, whose gums want lancing; perhaps the poor child will die in a fit, and then it will be all my fault. Mamma would never have forgotten that."

"Is your papa out now?" inquired Bertha, "hadn't you better go and tell him at once?"

"He's not at home, he went off to pay a visit directly we came out of church this evening. Mrs. Reade told me this morning. Didn't you see her stretching across a pew to speak to me; I wish she'd told him herself. I've let the whole day pass, what shall I do?"

"I wonder they didn't send again," said Bertha. "Oh, Hetty, there is your father crossing the square at this minute, run down and meet him at the door."

Hetty flew off, and a few minutes after Bertha heard the door shut again, and the doctor's foot-step on the pavement below.

"Was he very angry?" she inquired, when Hetty slowly entered the room again, looking very pale and frightened.

"I don't know, he didn't say a word," replied Hetty; "but I shan't be easy till he comes back. Only think if the child dies through my forgetfulness."

"That's hardly likely; if it had been ill, they would have sent," Bertha replied.

But Hetty shook her head, and remained standing by the window, looking very dejected, till it grew so dark that it was impossible to distinguish anything outside. The half hour that the doctor was absent seemed ages. Several times she exclaimed, "What can he be staying such an age for?" But, at last, at the sound of a step coming along the quiet square she started, and once more ran downstairs to meet him.

"Well," said Mr. Brewster, as in the gaslight he saw his daughter's pale face, "what's the matter?"

"Only the child, papa; was it very ill?" gasped Hetty.

"No, there's nothing the matter with it. Oh, I see, you fancied that it might die in consequence of your carelessness. Well, it was, perhaps, as well you should be frightened into being more careful in future. Mrs. Reade was rather indignant about the matter. Why, Hetty, don't be so silly." For

Hetty's nervous alarm had ended in a flood of tears.

"I thought you would be so angry, papa," sobbed Hetty; "it was so careless of me. I can't think how I could have done it."

"No more can I. It was shockingly careless, and I'm frightfully angry; but still I think you had better run back to the drawing-room, and ring the bell for lights. I don't see why you should keep your friend in the dark."

With these words Mr. Brewster disappeared into his study, and Hetty slowly returned to Bertha, to whose eager inquiry she replied—

"Papa says there's nothing the matter with the child, but Mrs. Reade is very indignant at my forgetting her message."

"But is Mr. Brewster very angry?" pursued Bertha, thinking that something must be wrong from the sound of Hetty's voice.


"He says he's frightfully angry, but I don't think he is. Don't talk about it any more, Bertha; here's Burns coming to light the gas."

In the excitement resulting from more sight-seeing than she had ever gone through in her life before, Bertha found the weeks of her visit pass very rapidly, and the day of her departure was fast approaching before they had found time to do half

that they had intended. One engagement they had made, from which they did not expect to derive much pleasure, except, as Bertha remarked, the satisfaction of knowing that one has done one's duty. Florence had insisted on their both spending an evening with her before Bertha left; and though Hetty declared that she could not tolerate Mr. Dalton, and hated dining there, she could not but allow that they had no excuse for refusing the invitation.

"I have never been here to spend the evening since poor Ada died," said Hetty, as they approached the house. "Now, Bertha, don't laugh if Mr. Dalton should ask you whether you think some dish on the table is likely to make him ill. He is almost certain to do it, so I thought I would prepare you. Oh, how queer it will be to see Florence in Miss Dalton's place at the head of the table!"

Strangely unlike she certainly did look, that elegant, easy figure, whose every movement was graceful—that delicately-chiselled face, with its ever-varying expression—that rich but tasteful dress—what a perfect contrast they formed to the stiff, unyielding form and dress which had so lately been seen in that place; and yet who would say that the change was for the better. Surely Miss Dalton, with all her coldness to the rest of the world, had been more truly a friend and companion



to her brother, in whose tastes and habits she thoroughly agreed, than the beautiful young wife could be, who cared nothing at all for him whom she had vowed to love and honour, and had married him simply for the sake of the wealth and station he possessed, and which her father had lost.

Many such thoughts as this passed through Bertha's mind as she sat between Frank Dalton and his father at the dinner-table, and marked with indignant surprise the indifference with which Florence treated her husband. "I shall have to mind what I am about when we go into the drawing-room, or I shall say something rude," she said to herself. "I wonder what Hetty thinks of it;" for Hetty was unusually silent, and scarcely joined in the conversation, which was principally carried on between Florence and Bertha, with occasional remarks from Mr. Dalton, chiefly in the shape of incomprehensible jokes and bad puns.

It was an evident relief to Florence when she could leave her husband and step-son to the enjoyment of their wine, and retreat with her guests to the drawing-room; nor did she scruple to acknowledge it. "Hetty, you look terribly bored. I am most sorry to have been obliged to subject you to such an infliction. I was in hopes Mr. Dalton would have had his dinner alone, as he does sometimes, and that Frank would have found it absolutely

necessary to visit some of his ragged schools, as he invariably does when I want him to escort me anywhere; but now we are free to enjoy ourselves. You have not told me yet what you think of the new curtains—are they not lovely?”

“Very pretty,” replied Hetty, absently; “but, Florence, you forget that I have known Mr. Dalton all my life, and I am quite aware that he is rather—well, rather peculiar.”

“Rather,” said Florence, laughing. “Well, I am glad you know him, and that I shall be saved the trouble of explaining, as I am continually obliged to do. Now, Bertha, sit down; when you feel inclined, I want you to come upstairs and see a new dress I’ve just had made for my sister’s grand party next week. It is perfectly enchanting, and quite my own idea.”

And from a description of this dress, Florence proceeded to enter into the fullest details of various dresses she had seen at the drawing-room, when she was presented shortly before her marriage, and into elaborate descriptions of the *soirées* and balls she intended to give the following winter. At first it seemed rather amusing, but as Florence’s voice flowed on in an unceasing talk about frills, ruchings, lace, muslin, satin, and all the other details of dress and finery, Bertha’s attention gradually wandered away, and when Mr. Brewster came in about

nine o'clock with Frank Dalton, he was amused to perceive that she was almost asleep.

"Hetty and her friend have had too much dissipation lately," he remarked to Florence, as she seated herself at the piano; "you will excuse me if I take them away early."

"You will not take them away for more than an hour yet. Hetty and I are going to play a duet which we learned in our school-days; and then Hetty is going to sing to us. We have a great deal to do yet, and you can go and talk to Frank, Mr. Brewster."

"No, indeed, I am going to enjoy the music, and Frank had better do so too. Don't you care for music, Frank?"

"I've no objection to it; but the passion some people have for it seems to me simply absurd, if not sinful, when we think how much time they waste upon it."

Mr. Brewster smiled, but made no reply till the lady of the house ceased playing, and then he said, "Does not that delicious air convince you that it is allowable to have a stronger feeling than simply no objection to music, Frank. Well, perhaps you have not a taste for Mendelssohn; let us have your duet, Hetty. What is it, Mozart? Well, that's a different style at any rate. Oh, that impracticable fellow has taken up a book."

"I'm glad you like music, Mr. Brewster," said Florence, heartily, when she and Hetty had finished; "it is such dreary work playing to people who think it is wrong to say they care for anything but Sunday-school teaching, total abstinence societies, and such things. What is the harm in saying straight out, I'm fond of music? I know that you don't agree with me about balls and many things, but you are not always bringing up the subjects on which we do not agree, as Frank always is, and ignoring those on which we do."

"No, I am a peaceable man," replied Mr. Brewster, smiling. "I dislike quarrelling, perhaps Frank will dislike it equally when he is as old as I am; eh, Frank, don't you think so?"

"I beg your pardon, I was not attending," said Frank, looking up from his book, "were you speaking to me?"

"Yes, I was saying to Mrs. Dalton, who complains that you are fond of discussing matters with her on which it is impossible you can agree, that in time you will become as great a lover of peace as I am; but in order that you and I may not quarrel concerning the time of our departure, Mrs. Dalton, may I ask if you will let us have some more music now."

"You are mistaken, Brewster, if you think I am fond of discussion or argument for their own

sakes," said Frank, as Florence began to play again; "but when two people disagree as entirely as Mrs. Dalton and I do, it is impossible that we can altogether avoid alluding to subjects on which unfortunately we have no sympathy. Besides, I feel it a sacred duty to speak out to everybody, no matter who they may be, who seem to me to be walking in dangerous paths."

"I know you do," said the doctor, gravely, "and I admire your honesty; but I would warn you, Frank, as a man who has seen more of life than you, and much more of death, that while precept does much, example does much more; and if you would exalt the religion which your words recommend, let it not sour you towards all the innocent enjoyments of this world. But Mrs. Dalton is wondering what we are talking about so earnestly. Oh! Hetty, are you going to sing? Well, my child, make haste; you look very tired."

"I am glad it is over," exclaimed Hetty, as a few minutes after they were standing in the hall of their own house; "good-night, papa, we'll go to bed at once."

A week after this and Bertha was at her own home, and Hetty was left to the quiet of her home-life. Mrs. Brewster was still detained in attendance on her sister, and though the last week of the holidays was enlivened by a visit from Freddy, Hetty

missed her mother sadly, and could hardly believe that she must really go back to school without seeing her. Mr. Brewster, too, was unusually busy, and uncertain whether he should be able to get away for his ordinary holiday, and even if he did, it would probably be merely to join his wife in Scotland.

"You must be quite looking forward to going back to school," her father said several times when, as he fancied, there was a shade of sadness on Hetty's face, owing, no doubt, to the want of companions and society; but Hetty would not complain, she knew that her presence made his home less dull than it would otherwise have been, and that knowledge was indescribably delightful.

Nor was his praise less so when, the evening before her return to school, Mr. Brewster pressed her fondly to his bosom, saying, tenderly, "Hetty, my child, I am very glad this is to be your last quarter, you are becoming a very useful and valuable member of the household, and we shall miss you very much during the next four months. Mamma will be very pleased to hear what an efficient substitute you have proved in her absence. She will not be half so much afraid of leaving us another time."

CHAPTER XX.

SYMPATHY.

Heaven decrees
To all the gift of ministering to ease;
The gentle offices of patient love,
Beyond all flattery, and all praise above;
The mild forbearance of another's fault;
The taunting word, suppressed as soon as thought.
On these Heaven bade the sweets of life depend,
And crushed ill fortune when she gave a friend.

H. MORE.

THREE weeks had passed since Hetty's return to school, and it was the first week of October, when the monotony of the daily routine of lessons was broken by the arrival at The Croft of a new pupil. The little bed which had stood close to Hetty's during the first year of her school life, and which had been taken down after Ada's death, was once more put up in its former place; and from this circumstance Maggie, Ella, and Hetty guessed—and guessed truly—that the new girl was to share their room.

To Maggie—sociable, open-hearted Maggie—this discovery gave nothing but satisfaction. "The

more the merrier," was her motto; but from Ella and Hetty some sounds of discontent were heard.

"We have been so comfortable together, we three," Hetty remarked, in rather a regretful tone.

And Ella added, "That, however nice a new girl might seem to be, one never could be sure of her for the first three months; and that it was very strange, the new girls were nearly always put into that room."

"I should think we ought to consider that a compliment," replied Maggie, laughing. "Mrs. Travers wouldn't put them here if she thought we should do them any harm. I wonder what this new girl's name is?"

"Girdlestone; Louisa Girdlestone, I heard Miss Travers call her," said Hetty. "She is very shy and timid, Miss Travers said. I'm glad I'm not her. Just think how she must dread this evening."

It was while the three girls were dressing in the morning that these remarks had passed between them, and the object of their observations was expected to arrive that evening.

"She hopes we shan't be able to see her if she comes when it's dark," exclaimed Bertha, laughing, when it was discovered that a fly had been ordered to meet the eight o'clock train. "I am afraid she'll be disappointed. I, for one, always take a good look at new girls."

"You do, Bertha," said Hetty. "I remember it quite well the evening I came to school."

"Did I make you very unhappy? I'm sorry. But you got over it, and so will Louisa Girdlestone, I've no doubt, unless she's a goose."

No, she was no goose; and yet it was a long time before she could quite get over the alarm which seized upon her when she found herself subjected to the inspection of so many pairs of eyes. Nervous and timid by nature, she had grown more and more retiring as she advanced towards womanhood; and now, at the age of fifteen, when she was sent from the quiet home where she had lived alone with her grandmother all her life, the habit of shrinking from notice, and hiding herself from all intercourse with strangers, had become so entirely part of her nature, that she was totally unable to enter into an ordinary conversation, or appreciate in the smallest degree the common pleasures and amusements of girls of her own age.

To such a girl the prospect of school life could be little else than positively alarming. Nor is it strange that, when fairly started on her journey, poor Louey Girdlestone should have given herself up to such melancholy broodings that, when she presented herself at The Croft, it was with red eyes, and an expression of such hopeless despondency, that even those among the girls who felt most

compassion for her could scarcely forbear from smiling.

"Hush! don't laugh at her. She will be better to-morrow," said Mrs. Travers, as the poor girl, having gladly acquiesced in the proposal that she should go to bed, had retreated from the drawing-room with such brief good-nights, that a suppressed titter passed round the group assembled at the table.

"My dears, you must know what a misery such shyness as that is. You ought to pity her, and not laugh at her. Come, I think one of you three who sleep in that room might go upstairs, and see if you can help her with her unpacking, and show her some of our ways. No, not two of you," she added, as Hetty and Maggie both rose at this remark. "Hetty, my dear, suppose you go."

"Maggie would have done much better," thought Hetty, as she slowly ascended the stairs; "shy people always make me feel shy too, and Maggie seems to have a special gift for making people feel at home. I wonder whether I shall ever get it. She did me so much good the evening I came. How long ago it seems! I'm half afraid to speak to this girl, she jumps so every time she's spoken to; but I suppose I must. What shall I call her—Miss Girdlestone, or Louey? Oh, I think Louey will be best; it sounds more friendly. Louey,

can I help you, you look so tired to-night? Mrs. Travers said I might come and help you. Won't you undress and get into bed while I hang up those dresses in the cupboard?"

Louey turned round like a startled deer. She thought she had escaped from the gaze of those strange girls, and here was one of them following her upstairs. Some people would have been cross under the circumstances, but Louey was seldom cross. When others would often show their annoyance by being rude and disagreeable, Louey more frequently melted into tears; and this was her resource in the present instance.

"I don't know where to put these things," she said, sinking down on the foot of her bed, and pointing to a heap of clothes which she had pulled out of her box, without having the least notion where they were to go. "I never packed or unpacked before in my life."

"No, I daresay not. If your train hadn't been so late, Ellis, the maid who looks after our clothes, would have done it all for you, but now she's busy putting the two little ones to bed; and Mrs. Travers desired me to tell you that you had better only take out what you want to-night, and leave everything else for her to do to-morrow morning."

"But I've got all these dresses out," said Louey, hopelessly. "I can't put them back again."

"Oh, I'll hang them up in the cupboard for you ; that's easily done," replied Hetty, cheerily ; "and in the meantime you can undress, can't you?"

Louey assented ; but it was some time before she showed any inclination to bestir herself ; but, at last, as Hetty continued her tidying operations, she suddenly rose, and, having taken off her dress, began unfastening such masses of bright hair, that her companion secretly concluded that she could never have had it cut from the time she was born. Hetty did not know that from under these long thick tresses, as they half hid her face, Louey was venturing to take some shy peeps at her, and gradually coming to the conclusion that she was the nicest person in this very dreadful house. She was wondering what she should do next, when all the work of hanging up the dresses and putting away the things that lay on the floor was finished. Should she venture to say anything to Louey about her home, or would it make her cry again ? It seemed too great a risk to run. So, when the matter of the unpacking was concluded, she thought she would try another subject.

"It is very disagreeable coming to school at first, isn't it?" she remarked, nervously twisting a piece of string round her fingers. "I thought it so horrid not to have a room to myself when I came. I daresay you are used to it at home, aren't you?"

"Yes, a dear little room," Louey began, feeling suddenly eloquent; then, as suddenly growing shy again, she blushed, and stopped abruptly.

Hetty, however, was encouraged by this attempt, and went on: "But one soon gets used to anything. I'm quite fond of this room now."

"Fond of it!" exclaimed Louey, looking greatly surprised; "are you fond of anything at school?"

"Oh, yes, of a great many things; we are all fond of Mrs. and Miss Travers, and I'm very fond indeed of several of the girls, and of the house and garden, and so will you be soon, Louey."

Louey shook her head.

"Ah, you feel lonely now," said Hetty, "but you can't be lonely long here, there is so much going on."

Louey made no reply, and Hetty feared she had quite failed in her attempt at winning the new comer to confidence. "I have not got Maggie's kind manner," she lamented to herself, as she closed the door, and left her new schoolfellow to go to sleep. "Well, practice makes perfect; perhaps I shall succeed better next time."

Hetty might have added another word to the list she had given Louey of reasons why school was no longer the dreary place she had called it a year before; lessons were now no longer the burden to her they had once been; steady perseverance had at last brought its own reward, and what

she had at first done merely from a sense of duty, now gave her real pleasure and enjoyment; one thing only of all her lessons still troubled her greatly, what this was we shall discover by taking a peep into the school-room late one Monday evening.

Black Monday many of the girls called it, and all for the same reason. The lessons of the week always began with the French lessons given by the French governess, Mademoiselle Desmarets, a lady whose ideas of justice and necessary strictness were more rigid than her pupils liked.

They said she had favourites, if so, Hetty had never been one of them, for most of her troubles in the early days of her school-life had arisen from complaints made by Mademoiselle of her inattention and idleness. Of late, these complaints had of course been much less frequent, but still the French grammar continued to be, as Hetty called it, the torment of her life."

"It is the old thing again, isn't it, Hetty?" said Maggie Grey, coming into the school-room on the evening in question, on her way to the drawing-room, where the others were at work, and perceiving Hetty standing at the table, with her French grammar in her hand, "What are you going to do, get up early to-morrow to do it?"

"It is my turn to practise before breakfast, Maggie, and Mademoiselle says I am to have it ready to show her after breakfast; what shall I do?"

Maggie looked grave. "The only thing to be done is to ask leave to stay up here and do it now," she replied. "Mrs. Travers is in the study, hadn't you better go, Hetty?"

"I suppose so," and with her French grammar still in her hand, Hetty knocked at the study-door.

"Come in," said a soft voice, and Hetty was somewhat relieved at discovering that Miss Travers was the only occupant of the study. She was sitting at the table writing, but she looked up with her usual smile when Hetty entered, waiting to hear what she had to say.

"I thought Mrs. Travers was here," Hetty began; "please, Miss Travers, might I stay in the school-room half an hour longer to-night?"

"And miss a great piece of the book they are reading in the drawing-room; what for, Hetty?"

"Because, Miss Travers, Mademoiselle told me to write my exercise over again, and she says she must have it before lessons to-morrow morning, and really I have had no time to write it to-day."

"And how is it it was so badly done?" inquired Miss Travers, gravely.

"I don't know; I did it in rather a hurry," replied Hetty, colouring; "but I never shall conquer these horrid French exercises, they are much worse than German."

Miss Travers shook her head. "Neyer is rather

strong, Hetty ; but I suppose I must give you leave to stay in the school-room half an hour longer. Now take care it is written without a single mistake. What is it now ?" for Hetty was lingering.

"Please, Miss Travers, would you mind looking at this sentence, and telling whether I am to make *quelque* plural or not. Mademoiselle says *quelque* is written in three different ways ; but I can't understand the rules in the least."

"In other words, would I mind doing the exercise for you, Hetty ; you forget that it is in order that you may thoroughly understand those rules that the exercise is given. Of course it is easy enough for me to tell you when to add an *s* to *quelque* and when not to do it ; but if you will take the trouble to find it out yourself, you are much more likely to remember it. It was only this morning, Hetty, that I heard you tell Maggie the meaning of a German word, adding that you didn't think you should forget it as long as you lived, because you had had so much trouble to find it."

"But French is so much more difficult, Miss Travers."

"More difficult than German, I do not think so ; but that has nothing to do with the matter. Now read that piece over carefully, and see if you cannot find the answer to your question yourself. I am sure you can."

"This piece in small print, I didn't think that was of any consequence."

Miss Travers laughed. "That accounts for your being puzzled," she said; "well, now go and finish your exercise, and don't say again you can't understand rules when you haven't read them."

"French grammar is such hopeless stuff," sighed Hetty, as she returned to her task, "I don't quite believe that Mademoiselle herself understands it, so how can I expect to."

"I suppose our lives would be too happy and comfortable if French grammar had never been invented or discovered, or whatever you call it," said Maggie, when Hetty repeated to her what Miss Travers had said. "I suppose it's right we should have something to try our patience; but I should be thankful if that poor child Louey could be spared such an infliction, her face of terror when Mademoiselle goes on about her *complements* and her *proposition principale* quite haunts me, it is wonderful how much the child knows considering that she has never learned anything like anybody else; but about a great many ordinary things she seems to know nothing."

"I was trying to help her with her French on Saturday, and so I hadn't time to do my exercise properly," remarked Hetty.

"You are very good to her, Hetty, she looks

upon you something in the light of a guardian angel, I believe," said Maggie, laughing; "but I was going to ask you about Florence; have you heard from your mamma about her to-day?"

"Yes, I had a letter this afternoon; poor Florence! mamma speaks in a very hopeless way about her."

"What did she say? does she know how ill she is, do you think?"

"Mamma says that papa said something to her about it; would you like to hear what mamma says?"

"Very much indeed, and so would Ella. Ella, Hetty had a letter from Mrs. Brewster about Florence Dalton to-day."

"Did she? oh, how is she?" said Ella, approaching the window where Hetty and Maggie were standing.

"Mamma says," began Hetty, opening the letter, "'I could not write yesterday, though I knew you would be very anxious to hear, because poor Florence seemed so anxious I should stay with her, and I did not get home till after post time. She does not like the sick nurse Mr. Dalton had engaged, and has insisted on her being sent away, and her own maid knows nothing at all about nursing. She is very feverish and excited, her cough is dreadful; still papa does not give up hope, nor does Dr.

Hewitson either. I am very glad to be able to be with her, for, poor girl, it is a new thing for her to be ill, and she is not very patient under suffering. You want to know whether she knows how ill she is; I can hardly tell, but I think she must. Papa told her yesterday that she was very ill indeed, and she has asked me several times to-day whether he thought her worse. I will write again to-morrow, Hetty, if I can; and we must all pray much for her, that if it please God this sickness may not be unto death. It would be terrible indeed for her to leave the world, which I fear she has loved so much, to enter on an eternity which she has tried to forget.’”

“It is inflammation of the lungs, is it not, Hetty?” said Ella, after a pause; “was she at all ill when you left?”

“Oh, dear no. Papa thinks she caught cold at a large party she went to about a week ago. She told him when she was first unwell, that she had sat down in a great draught after dancing, and that she had done nothing but shudder all night afterwards. I thought,” continued Hetty, “that she ought not, well, perhaps I shouldn’t say that.”

“Say what, Hetty?” inquired both the girls at once.

“Well, it seems to me so strange she can like to go to so many parties, and leave Mr. Dalton alone by himself, but, of course, I’m no judge of such things.”

"I don't think we should be harsh to poor Florence, now," said Maggie, sorrowfully; "I'm so glad she has such a nice kind friend as your mamma, Hetty."

"Yes, and she seems getting really fond of her, her own sister comes to see her, but she cannot stay with her, mamma says."

Day after day passed away, and the tidings of poor Florence grew rather worse than better. Hetty, Ella, Maggie, and all those who had known her at school, felt so anxious that it was hard work to give their mind to their studies. It seemed so impossible to believe that that bright, beautiful, young creature, could be going down to the grave, to darkness and corruption, hanging between life and death; and each day, as the post-time drew nearer, Hetty's anxiety seemed almost uncontrollable, lest by any accident her mother should have been prevented from sending her the daily account. And when the letter was placed in her hand, and this fear was forgotten, the worse foreboding of what news it might contain, would frequently make her dread to tear it open.

At first the news that Florence had taken cold at a party, and was very unwell, had given her but little alarm. Florence had always seemed so well and strong, so rarely suffering from headaches, or any other of the numerous small pains that flesh is heir to,

that Hetty had scarcely given the matter a second thought. She was a good deal engrossed just then, with her *protégée*, Louey Girdlestone, whom she had taken under her care, and in whose progress she felt a lively interest. The news, therefore, of her former friend's danger, took her at last completely by surprise, and for a time she felt quite unable to take any comfort from the scraps of hope her mother gave her.

She called to mind that Florence had once mentioned to her that her mother had died of consumption, and that when they were children, she, and her brothers and sister were all supposed to have delicate lungs. "I daresay we shall all go off in galloping consumptions some day," Florence had said carelessly, and Hetty could not help fearing that that time had come.

But after several days' anxiety, news came that the great danger was past; the inflammation had been subdued, and though it was impossible yet to say how much mischief it had done, it was hoped that Florence would in time regain her former strength.

It was hoped, but much fear mingled with that hope, and though Mr. Dalton and her own family shut their eyes to the great alteration which the illness had wrought, the doctor and his wife grew less and less sanguine from day to day.

"Florence thinks she shall be better when the spring comes," Hetty remarked, in answer to one of the many inquiries which were made of her from day to day. "She is sure it is only the cold weather which prevents her from gaining strength, but mamma is beginning to be afraid she will never be any better; she gets up for a little while every day now, but she seems to have no strength at all."

"She is going into a consumption, you mean," replied Maggie. "How sad it seems that a cold should leave such terrible effects."

"Yes," said Hetty, "and mamma says Florence keeps on wondering why she should have caught cold on that particular evening, when she had often done much more imprudent things before, and never got any harm. She told mamma that the last term she was at school she used to get up in the night and run downstairs, often with bare feet, to look at Miss Travers' examination questions, in order that she might look out the answers, and so gain the prizes. She says several times she lay awake for an hour afterwards shivering all over, and yet it did her no harm."

"Oh, Hetty," said Maggie, "that story explains the mystery that has so often puzzled me. Don't you remember those examinations, and how we used to wonder how Florence managed to answer the questions as she did, when we knew she had

scarcely prepared at all ? and don't you remember that poor Ada woke in the night, and was frightened because she thought she had heard somebody walking about the house ? this explains it all."

"Yes," said Hetty, sorrowfully ; "but you won't say anything about it, will you ? I always thought there was something wrong about that examination, but I didn't care to know what it was. There can be no use in talking about it now."

"Of course not," replied Maggie, "one would rather try and remember all that was nice in Florence now, and there *was* a good deal that was nice, wasn't there ?"

Hetty was silent for some time, but at last she said, "It is all so miserable about Florence, I can hardly bear to think of it."

CHAPTER XXI.

LOOKING FORWARD.

Thou knowest all the future, gleam of gladness
By stormy clouds too quickly overcast,
Hours of sweet fellowship and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be crossed at last.
Oh, what could confidence or hope afford
To tread that path, but this—Thou knowest, Lord.

“Oh, Hetty, what shall I do? I’m sure I wish I’d never come to school.” These words, uttered in Louey’s most plaintive and melancholy tone, were addressed to Hetty as she entered the school-room one evening just as lessons were over for the day, and the girls were either sitting or standing in various attitudes about the room.

“Why, what’s the matter? How often you say that, Louey,” said Hetty, laughing, as she leaned over the girl’s chair, and pushed back the masses of bright hair that had a habit of falling over her brow when she was earnestly occupied. “Is that translation quite beyond your powers?”

“No, that’s easy enough,” said poor Louey;

"but," glancing timidly round the room at the rest of her companions, who were many of them looking greatly amused, "but they were telling me about the examinations, and I can't think whatever I shall do. I shan't be able to answer a single question."

"Oh yes, you will, they are not so very difficult," said Hetty, encouragingly. "I believe that some of you," she added, turning to the other girls, "have been imposing upon her."

"We only told her that she may have to give a list of the dates of all the kings of England from the Conquest to the present time, and give full and particular accounts of the personal attractions of the different queens, and tell how many children they each had," replied Bertha, gravely. "I am sure it is quite true."

"And very possibly you may have to give the names of the captains who commanded the different ships in the Spanish armada, and describe the dress Queen Elizabeth wore at her coronation," added Evelyn, contemptuously.

"Nonsense, Louey, don't you believe them," exclaimed Hetty. "We never have such absurd questions as those. When you have done your other lessons, I'll tell you what kind of things Miss Travers will ask us, and show you the best way of reading up your history. I should not be surprised if you do very well in history, that is your strong

point ; it is French, and German, and arithmetic you will find the most difficult."

"And yet with such an efficient teacher as Hetty, you can hardly fail to do wonders even in arithmetic," said Evelyn, sarcastically. She had not favoured Hetty with much notice lately, but she was indignant that any of her remarks should be called nonsense, and was anxious to revenge herself by annoying her.

Hetty, however, took no notice of this speech ; she was watching Louey as she carefully finished her translation, occasionally suggesting an improvement, or helping her to the meaning of a word. Louey had lately been surnamed by the girls "Hetty's pet lamb," so anxiously and zealously had the latter watched over her from the first night of her arrival ; and well was it for poor Louey that she had found such an able defender, for had she been left to herself, and to follow her own peculiar tastes and inclinations, the shyness that was part of her nature would have cut her off from all healthy association with her schoolfellows, whom she had from the first feared and dreaded as beings to whom she was utterly unaccustomed. If they laughed among themselves or whispered, her morbid sensitiveness instantly suggested the idea that she was the object of their mirth ; and worried and made more nervous than ever by this fancy, the words in the books

seemed to swim before her eyes, and everything else grew dim and indistinct before the terrible idea that she had made herself ridiculous.

Such fears as these Hetty strove to reason away, and not entirely without success. "She is taming," Ella frequently remarked; "she was just the girl either to improve or just the contrary at school, but her improvement is chiefly owing to you, Hetty. We have had plenty of amusement out of her, but I'm afraid we have none of us troubled ourselves much about helping her on."

Hetty smiled. Ella rarely paid compliments, but when she did she meant what she said, and Hetty knew this quite well. "I leave that sort of thing to Maggie and Bertha," she was apt to say in her abrupt fashion; "I haven't a talent for flattery."

"You despise it, Ella," said Maggie one day in reply; "you think it is silly and useless."

"No, indeed, and yet I don't know. I think it is very nice and pleasant in you, but I don't quite see the use of it. If people do right, their consciences tell them so—they oughtn't to need to hear it from other people."

"I fancy some people's consciences do not perform that office for them," replied Maggie, laughing. "Your friend Loney's, for instance; she never seems to me to be sure whether she has done right or wrong."

I am sure there are some people who are helped on by a little flattery, or rather, I mean, by honest, truthful compliments."

"Which it is your mission to serve out to them judiciously and as they are needed," said Ella. "Well, Maggie, I am sure at any rate that whether you have exceeded your mission or not, you will be greatly missed."

"Not more than you and Hetty, Ella darling, if so much," replied Maggie. "It makes me quite sad to think that this examination is our last, and that our happy, happy school-days are nearly over."

"You are quite sentimental, Maggie," said Ella, but there were tears in her eyes as she turned away from her friend.

The prospect of parting softens many hard places in our hearts, and though all the three girls who were on the eve of their departure were anxious to acquit themselves well in this their last examination, yet the desire to leave no unpleasant remembrances behind them inspired them to avoid, as much as possible, all recurrence of the old jealous feelings which had embittered many of the past breakings up.

It was hard, certainly, for Hetty, when she felt Evelyn's cold eyes watching her as she pursued her eager work of preparation, not to experience a burn-

ing desire to win, for the sake of humbling her rival ; but Hetty had kept an earnest watch over the angry spirit within, and Evelyn's annoying speeches had lost much of their sting.

To make her *protégée*, Louey, perform her part creditably, was also so much on Hetty's mind, that her own desire to succeed was frequently forgotten, or thrown greatly into the background. Possibly, it was this forgetfulness of self that made Hetty much less nervous about the examinations than on previous occasions.

"I only wish they were over," she remarked, in reply to Maggie's inquiry as to whether she felt very anxious about them. The first was already over, and they were enduring the usual suspense about the result.

"This last week always seems so long," said Maggie.

"It will come to an end some day," replied Hetty, sighing. "Maggie, I've something to tell you. I've been feeling very malicious all day."

"Is that all you had to tell me ? for, if so, I wonder at your taking the trouble. I always say we are all malicious in examination time."

"Yes ; but I was going to tell you why. You know Mademoiselle told us what pages of grammar to learn up for the examination. Well, Evelyn's

grammar is a different edition, and she is learning quite the wrong piece."

"Is she? What a state of mind she'll be in when she finds it out!" said Maggie, mischievously.

"Yes; but I suppose we ought to tell her. I was strongly tempted to keep the discovery to myself, because then I should have had a chance of being third in French, which would have been charming; but the French grammar is always beyond me, and, except by some such slip as that, she will be sure to beat me."

"Do you think so?" said Maggie, regretfully. "I should have liked you to have been higher than Evelyn in French; but you certainly ought to tell her."

"Yes, I will," replied Hetty, "and put up with being beaten. I can bear it."

She kept her word, and Evelyn, greatly surprised, thanked her more graciously than usual for the information, though inwardly she wondered at Hetty's foolishness. "How could she give up such an advantage as my mistake would have been to her?" she said to herself. "Perhaps she thinks that out of gratitude I should let her beat me; but, if so, she's mistaken: that wouldn't be right. What a fortunate thing I've found out! Oh, if I could only be first in French, how glad I should be!

Papa wouldn't be so certain that I need masters if I could carry such news as that home to him."

But that aspiration was not destined to be gratified. Though Evelyn tried her very utmost, and studied till her head ached, the much-envied place at the top of the list was attained by Maggie, who always received her honours so much as if she scarcely cared for them, that Evelyn felt doubly indignant at her defeat. Ella was second, and, as Hetty had prophesied, Evelyn was third.

"I didn't expect anything else," Hetty replied, when Maggie, Ella, and Bertha in turn condoled with her, and said how much they had hoped she would have been higher than Evelyn. "But I may be higher yet. There is no chance of my being first or second—Ella and Maggie will take care of that—and they are older than I, so I don't mind; but I should like to be third."

A very humble wish, and one to be speedily gratified. Twice Hetty had the pleasure of seeing her name in the place she had wished; but a greater success than she had hoped for was in store for her.

The last examination came, and a violent sick headache kept Ella a fast prisoner to her bed. Twice she tried to get up, but faintness obliged her to lie down again.

"I'm so sorry. Don't you think you'll be better after breakfast, dear Ella?" said Maggie, as she and

Hetty stood by her bed in real concern ; "it is so tiresome to miss the history when you know it so well."

"Yes, I am very sorry," said Ella ; "but I am glad for one reason—Hetty will be second now."

"Well, that is one good thing, certainly," said Maggie ; "I almost hope you may be first, Hetty."

"Not quite, I should think," said Hetty, laughing ; "but you forget, Evelyn or Bertha may be higher than I am."

"Evelyn won't," said Ella, positively, "and Bertha oughtn't to, she's got another term to stay at school, and can afford to let you win. Mind you impress that upon her, Maggie."

"Trust me," said Maggie, and darted downstairs.

Hetty, following a few minutes after, met Bertha, her round face brimming over with good humour, who stopped her to say, "There's not the remotest chance of my out-doing you, but if you feel in the least uneasy about your success, when you've read the questions, and will give me a sign, I'll boldly assert that Nebuchadnezzar was King of England, or any other fiction you like, to make sure of being below you."

"I'm sure I hope you won't," said Hetty ; but Bertha was gone.

The evening came ; the last examination was

over, and the last evening had arrived. Ella had been in bed all day, but she looked better than she had yet done when, with Maggie half-lying, half-sitting on the bed by her side, and Hetty seated on the foot, she listened to their account of the day's proceedings.

"Hetty and I may be considered bracketed, as there's only a mark between us," said Maggie, and Ella added,

"There never was anything so delightful—you first, Hetty second, and Bertha third. What does Evelyn say?"

"She doesn't say anything," replied Maggie, smiling; "she's not best pleased."

"Well, you are contented, aren't you, Hetty?" said Ella, turning towards her; "your father will be satisfied, won't he?"

"Yes; but oh! Ella, it makes me almost melancholy to think that this is the end of my lessons, that I've done altogether now."

"It is a satisfactory end," said Maggie; "but I own it makes one feel sad to think that school is over, and we are quite grown up. However, I suppose we shall none of us have quite an idle life at home. I have thought of all sorts of things I mean to do. We have been putting on our armour here, Hetty; now we've got to fight."

"Yes," replied Hetty, absently drawing lines on

the counterpane with a pencil, "I used to think that I should have nothing to do but amuse myself when I left school; but I know better now. I hope I shall never get into the way of thinking so again."

"It will be a change," remarked Ella, thoughtfully. "Here we have been obliged to do things at particular times: we have had governesses to make us do them, and we couldn't help it; but at home we shall have to be our own governesses: our time, to a certain extent, will be our own, our responsibility will be much greater, don't you think so, Maggie?"

Maggie made no reply for some minutes, a slight cloud rested for a minute on her earnest sunny face, but it vanished as she said, "Yes, Ella, I am sure it will, and I don't know how we could venture to look forward at all to the mistakes we are sure to make, the sins we are certain to fall into, the laziness, the carelessness we shall no doubt be guilty of, if it wasn't for one thing."

"And that one thing, Maggie?" said Ella, softly.

Maggie looked at Hetty, and Hetty murmured, "The blood of Christ."

* * * * *

There is no need to follow them home. To see how each fulfilled or failed in the various duties

which the hand of the All-Wise had appointed her, would be a long and difficult task ; but of two or three a few words remain to be said.

Two years more did Florence Dalton lie on her couch of weakness and suffering ; two dreary years of hoping and longing for the strength never more to be hers, or fruitless, terrible struggling against the hand that chastened her. Then at last her proud spirit bowed, and ere she passed away, some rays of Divine light came to cheer that dying chamber. But of that terrible illness, that wasted life, it is sad to think ; and neither Hetty nor her mother could ever speak of Florence without tears.

Of the three who left The Croft together at Christmas-time full of life and full of hope, humble hope that they might be permitted to do some work in their Master's vineyard, one—bright, loving Maggie—did not long remain to serve Him in the Church on earth. For her, though sorely missed, no tears need be shed. Her time was come, and her Lord had need of her. But with Ella and Hetty the fight is not over yet. There are failings, grievous and many ; the brightest lot, as Hetty often proves, has still its crosses. But He who said, "Take up thy cross and follow Me," gives the needful strength and the will to bear, and she would not have it otherwise.

Does any one wonder how, in such a home as

hers, Hetty can have anything to trouble her? Surely all who know anything of human nature can testify that no earthly love can avert the many little daily trials which the frailties of our nature are certain to occasion, nor doubt for one minute that we need grace to bear them. Sometimes, when she returns from a visit to Westhayes, where Frank Dalton, softened by the gentle influence of his young wife Bertha, is actively employed among the poorer villagers, building schools and lecture-rooms for them, visiting and teaching them, the quiet round of home duties, teaching her little sisters music, reading and visiting with her mamma, even her class in the Sunday-school, which was once the highest object of her ambition—all these things seem small and insignificant, and she longs to be doing a greater work for God.

And may she not well long? When the day comes when our past lives will be seen in the full light of eternity, will not every action which we did for Christ look small, miserably small, compared with that great, that immeasurable love which passeth knowledge?

THE END.

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